

## Battling & Building

Nehemiah 4:11-23

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 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.

15 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.

16 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.

17 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.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.

23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

Building is a battle. Not everyone is excited that you are building your life in Christ! Not everyone is excited that His Church is growing and maturing!

We each are trying to build something of our lives, of our family. We each are trying to improve our homes. We're trying to build a church and build the kingdom of God.

On top of all these challenges we each have personal struggles we are dealing with and the constant attack of our enemy Satan, who wants to destroy our lives and our life's work.

That's why I like this short passage in Nehemiah about battling and building. They had a tool in one hand and a sword in the other.

They didn't have the luxury of a security force to back them up so they could focus on their work. They had to multitask and keep one eye on the work and the other eye on the enemy.

We need to remember there are 2 worlds, one is seen and one is unseen. Yes, we seem to just live in a physical world, but the spiritual world is just as real, and it is more powerful and eternal!

I challenge you to live in light of eternity, remembering your Creator, making sure He's your Savior, and allowing Him to be your helper as you go about your work and your lives.

**Nehemiah 4:11-21**

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.

The enemy planned a surprise attack. "We are going to take them when they are not looking for us."

What will be Nehemiah's strategy against a surprise attack?

**Nehemiah 4:13** Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

Nehemiah put every man in the position where he could defend his own family, which made him more comfortable when he was building, of course. With his family at home, some distance away from him, a builder did not know whether or not they were safe.

So Nehemiah put them with their families and armed them well.

Our first priority and main job on this earth is to take care of our family. But remember, we're not just talking about providing food, shelter, and necessities of life, but also providing for them spiritually.

This includes loving and nurturing, but also training them, leading them to church to learn about their Creator...the one we all will face someday!

**Nehemiah 4:14** 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.

"Remember the Lord" was to be their motto, their rallying cry.

As you may remember from history class -- in the

- Spanish-American War, our nation's battle cry was "Remember the Maine." The sinking of that ship motivated our response.
- In World War I it was "Remember the Lusitania."
- In World War II it was "Remember Pearl Harbor."
- 9/11 happened and we said, "Never Forget". It should motivate our response to Islamic Terrorism.
- Napoleon always reminded his soldiers of some past history to stir them up to fight.

When Paul the apostle wrote his letters to a young preacher named Timothy, he gave him a rallying cry.

**2 Timothy 2:8** Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

That is the rallying cry of believers today. "Remember the Lord" was the rallying cry for the Jews in Nehemiah's day.

There are a host of things you will have to battle while building.

### 1. The Tool Of Distraction

Verse 2: The enemy wants to talk to Nehemiah, or so they say. "Maybe we can work out a compromise." Nehemiah knew they were not sincere. When the devil can't defeat us as a roaring lion, he will try to approach us as an angel of light. "Let's have a retreat together down in the valley. Let's cozy up." Then he tries to distract us to compromise.

First the devil tries to cozy up to us in order to devour us. But once we are saved, he fails at that. Next, he tries to neutralize us thru entangling alliances. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em, and then take over!

Why the valley of Ono?

**Nehemiah 11:35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.**

Nehemiah is a craftsman, so he is especially tempted with this offer. Maybe he could get some ideas or tools to help with the wall, but it wasn't God's way...to join with the enemy to get ideas.

Nehemiah saw right thru the devil's attempt at distraction and compromise. He said, "The valley of Ono? O No!"

Aren't you glad he said "no no" to Ono?

Nehemiah said no because he had:

- Spiritual discernment not to join w/ the enemy and use the world's ways and water down the message.

End of verse 2 - they thought to do me mischief. How did he know that?  
Spiritual discernment!

What they really wanted was to kill him. And the devil makes sin look nice, but he wants to destroy you!

God's work must be done God's ways. The end doesn't justify the means.

Nehemiah understood that he had nothing in common with this worldly crowd, and therefore there was no basis for cooperation.

We need Christians with spiritual discernment, who will separate from the world, cut the old ties, and realize this great truth...

**Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**

2. The Curse of discouragement—it's the devil's #1 tool he uses to try to get you out of the game! Out of church, to give up on life.

Satan tries to discourage people in their finances...even if you tithe! Through your children, even though you bring them up in church, through problems in ministry at church, or through physical problems.

Discouragement doesn't discriminate. Even the best Christians are under its power at times.

- a. C. H. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, was given to depression and discouragement. He said, "I would not wish upon my worst enemy the depths of despair and discouragement I often feel for weeks or months at a time."
- b. John Wesley was also given to discouragement. He married poorly, the wrong woman. There were times she would drag him around the house by the hair! [That would only happen once at my house before I'd shave my head!]

- c. Verse 10: first 3 words...Judah was the chief tribe, the leaders among the nation, the cream of the crop! It was these that said, 'we can't do it, we can't continue.'

You're not a bad Christian because you get discouraged...only if you stay that way! If getting saved is the end of troubles then it's the front end! But now God is on your side to help you up, and to stretch you and help you grow thru it all.

Or, maybe you want it easy, and want heaven on earth. Jesus carried His cross, and you must carry yours...but how?

- d. Discouragement is debilitating. It will stop you dead in your tracks. "Anyone can do more than a man who has lost heart!"

Back in the days of horse-drawn wagons, a man was hauling logs. On a hill the horses couldn't make it, and gave up. He unloaded half the wagon, but they still wouldn't try...he emptied it completely, but still they had given up! They were utterly discouraged. They gave up and wouldn't try!

Some do this with:

- Marriage
- Children
- Church

But that's not what God wants. He wants us to stay in the game, put our shoulder to the wheel, keep trying, and keep trusting!

### 3. The Causes Of Discouragement

Verses 10-11

- a. Worn out  
they had been working hard, but still things weren't going anywhere.

b. They had lost their zest for the work.

Verse 6: It was halfway done. That's where we often get discouraged, when we're in the thick of it.

Halfway thru is when we get worn out...like rowing a boat across a big lake...in the middle you are worn out, but you realize to turn back is fruitless. You are worn out and discouraged, and maybe the only thing that sounds good is sitting still!

The men of Judah are worn out physically, emotionally, and psychologically. It is wise to know your limits, and learn how to say know, for if you get worn out you can get discouraged, and then you're no good to anybody, and will HAVE to say no to everybody!

c. Weighted down

Verse 10: "much rubbish"

They were looking at the total job, instead of just their section. They had miles to go and had their eyes on the wrong focus. Rocks everywhere. They were trying to juggle too much...they let life just pile up on them.

We must:

- Prioritize—not just what's the most fun, but what's most important. Not only what's most urgent, but truly important. We must set aside daily time for God as a priority, for family, for homework, for a project, and for church. Some of our young people have just laid it out clearly, and told their boss, I have a previous commitment on Sundays and Thursday's. That's God's time.

I won't take the Lord's Day and give it to anyone else. Not only because that offends the Lord, but also because it's a bad testimony to others I'll be with who know I claim to be a Christian, but it must not include dedication if I'll miss just for that!

- Plan—don't bounce around like the pinball in the machine, but learn to



live by a schedule...be organized. Most people don't plan to fail, they just fail to plan, and it leads to bigger failure!

- Plod—this means to just take it a day at a time, don't look at the whole job and the long term, but take the vision we laid out in planning and have some focus...what do I need to do today? Just plod away, and keep going.

“Life: by the yard it's hard, by the inch...what a cinch!”

“How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!”

d. Wasting away

Verse 11: Their enemies were planning. And Satan has a plan, so we might as well form a game plan, too!

The devil's plan is to hit us when we're down and discouraged, and we won't even see him coming. So our plan must be not to abide in discouragement, but to escape it!

Isaiah 54:17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

Notice from verse 10 it is compounded when Judah “said” it. That's how Satan can “spread” it to others. Then it became, “we are not able...”

James 3:4-5

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

What we say can be encouraging, or very discouraging to others around us. The same is true with what we do. Your presence in services can be an encouragement to others. So, let's prioritize, let's plan, and keep plodding along!

Nehemiah gave his people 3 steps to getting out of discouragement:

1. Nehemiah Armed The People

Verse 13 He said we're not going to take the enemies advances lying down. He gave them swords, spears, and bows. 'To be forewarned is to be forearmed.' It works for America and for the Christian as well!

Think about it: we already know what Satan is going to try to do. He's going to attack us with discouragement. So, we are foolish if we don't prepare ourselves and take up arms!

**Ephesians 6:10-13**

**10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.**

**11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

**12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**

**13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

Then it goes on to detail each piece of armour to put on!

Accept no substitutes. As David told Saul, I need my own armor, not another's. Don't try to be encouraged by anything other than Christ. Accept no other crutch.

Not drugs, not a hobby, not a holiday, not a movie. What does it take to lift you from discouragement?

No temporary help should be good enough...accept your armor from none other than Jesus...none else will do! How it must pain His heart to see us turn to other things that will never truly satisfy, when He has the answer and is close by, His hand held out just hoping we'll look to Him and grab on!

2. Nehemiah assured the people.

Verse 14: 'Your dad's bigger than their dad!'

If it had been written I'm sure Nehemiah would have quoted

**Romans 8:31**

**If God be for us, who can be against us?**

**Psalm 54:4**

**Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.**

**Isaiah 40:31**

**But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.**

That's the opposite of discouragement!

Know why we get discouraged? In a nutshell: because we take our eyes off the Lord!

Robert Louis Stevenson told of a ship being tossed by mighty waves. The passengers were very frightened and huddled together deep in the ship. After a while one of the passengers decided to go see the captain.

He worked his way all the way up near the pilot's bridge. He could see him thru the big window. The captain saw the passenger with fear written all over his face. So, seeing how afraid the man was, the captain threw him a great big smile.

The passenger returned to the others in the bottom of that ship and said, "It's ok, we'll be fine...I just saw the captain, and he was smiling!"

Are you discouraged? I beg you, look to heaven, and see the smile of captain Jesus! Keep your eyes on him, not on others.

Peace is not found in the absence of trouble; it is found in the presence of God. His arms are available to you if you'll let Him love and encourage you through the body called the church, the presence of His Holy Spirit, and through Bible verses.

**Psalm 18:2**

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

There's no panic in heaven, only plans.

**Romans 8:28**

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

3. Nehemiah aroused their spirits.

Verse 14: 'There's too much at stake to be discouraged. We cannot quit! We're not just building walls...we're fighting for our families and all we hold dear! It's not just brick and mortar, it's flesh and blood!'

Don't give up on:

- 
- Your church
- Your marriage
- Your children
- Your dreams
- What God has called you to do!

There are many discouragers...so we need you to join the ranks of the encouragers. Be a "glass half full" Christian, not half empty!

When Nehemiah saw the potential of the wall, many people saw only problems.

In verse 12, others came to Nehemiah and warned him of the impending dangers of building the wall saying, "they will be upon you." When Nehemiah saw hope many saw only hopelessness.

Although this opposition may have discouraged Nehemiah, he remained persistent to His God-given purpose. And so must you!

I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
There are battles to fight, by day and night,  
For God and the right—And I'll never let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
I'm sick, tis true, Worried and blue,  
And worn through and through, But I won't let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
I will never yield! What! Lie down on the field  
And surrender my shield? No, I'll never let go!

I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
May this be my song: "Mid legions of wrong—Oh, God, keep me  
strong  
That I may never let go!" -Author Unknown

Every day we remain discouraged is a day that we're not going anywhere for God. Don't let up, don't shut up, don't back up, and don't give up, until you're taken up!