

For We Are Despised +++

Nehemiah 4:1 – 23

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~ In our previous three reports from our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God, we have been riding horseback with Nehemiah as he examined the rebuilding of the walls and gates in Jerusalem after the seventy years captivity in Babylon. Nehemiah was an ingenious man who delegated rebuilding the different sections of the wall to various men and women. We went in and out of each of the ten gates and considered them and their spiritual meaning very carefully. We started at the sheep gate – which represents the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ – and we ended back at the sheep gate. If you have not read all five of our previous reports from Nehemiah, I suggest you go back and do so now.

For believers, the Christian life begins and ends at the cross of Christ. When we concluded our last report, the wall was about half-way finished. We have also seen in previous reports how the enemy — Satan — used various methods to discourage the workers from working; and we saw the devil was unsuccessful in hindering Nehemiah's progress in God's work. The enemy first simply laughed at the children of Israel; then, they ridiculed them openly before others – but now, they're going to try the last method — threatening them with violence — in an attempt to stop the work of the reconstruction of the walls in the city of Jerusalem. A threat of violence was the attempt to force the returning remnant to question their work; and cause them feel as though they may be doing the wrong thing....

¹ So it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

² And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

³ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

~ These enemies of God represent the methods Satan *always* uses to discourage and stop the work of God. The first phase of Satan's warfare is to laugh at you and ridicule you. Typically, this will stop the Lord's work dead in its tracks and that's it – the end. If that does not succeed, the second way the devil works is to have others despise your work for God; and generally, those who should be supporting your work for the Lord will attempt to make others hate you and despise you by spreading lies, gossip and rumors. If the first method doesn't work — this second way is usually extremely effective at discouraging us, trust me. When this happens, you'll find the going extremely rough, you may be sure.

But when those fail, the third way the devil works will be to attempt to make you question what you are doing. This is when the enemy of God will twist the Scriptures to make you think you just might be wrong about it all. I think many of the Jews were asking themselves the questions from verse two. I'm sure most of them had serious doubts about whether or not they could complete this task.

Tobiah is the sarcastic wiseacre such as we find all over social media; and I must admit there is a touch of humor in his statement about the fox. A fox can walk on the ground and not even leave a trace. A fox can run on a wall and not disturb anything on it. That third way is an attack that is so difficult to withstand that most men of God – even very well-meaning men – throw their hands up and say, “... *I've had enough!*” Well, what these men are mocking and despising just happens to be the thing that is precious to God....

⁴ 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:

⁵ 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.

~ Nehemiah's only recourse or resource against Satan's attacks was prayer! He didn't even answer the enemies of God – he just went straight to the Lord God of Heaven. I think this prayer may have even been made right there on horseback. The prayer in this chapter is a legitimate and rightful prayer under law – Nehemiah had every right to ask God for justice by destroying the enemy. We, today, have every right to ask for a righteous judgment to be made against our enemies, too. God intends to avenge us; He says vengeance is His and He will repay, and that has never been changed – I don't care *WHAT* or *HOW MUCH* one quotes from the New Testament; you cannot get around this perfectly acceptable prayer to the Lord God of Heaven.

Perhaps you don't believe the Bible – which is okay; but, that's your problem – and I suggest you make some notes right here if you do believe God at His Word; because the Holy Spirit is speaking to you right now. Of course, believers are *NOT* to use this method against each other; although the hypocrites who say we shouldn't pray this prayer are always the ones calling other believers the devil and all that garbage — but I digress, sort of. Believers are to be kind and tender-hearted one to another; forgiving one another even as Christ has forgiven us. Further, the believer is *NEVER* to take revenge by himself under *ANY* circumstances. Paul said, “... *avenge not yourself but give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*”

There are certain matters we must turn over to the Lord; and we are assured He will handle them for us – every time. If we take matters into our own hands, it reveals we are not walking by faith. Sometimes, though, the Lord will instruct us on how to handle certain things in His Name; for example, there is a time a rebuke should be given – sometimes that rebuke can be very harsh, too. Paul told the Corinthians to deal with the sin in the church; and if the sinning party would not repent, Paul said:

1 Corinthians 5:⁵ *To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus ~*

There are many times we are to reprove, rebuke, correct and convict in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “*rebuke*” means to threaten; and

“*exhort*” means to comfort. There are times a rebuke *MUST* be delivered. God help the preacher who isn’t faithful in that connection, too, by the way. The child of God is to learn how to use the Sword of the Lord – the Word of God, that is – and sometimes that thing which is corrupt and wrong in our lives needs to be cut out. At the same time, we need to learn how to apply the balm of Gilead to a broken heart.

Most so-called “Christians” today only want a sentimental and emotional – and very short – message that ultimately bleeds out into nothingness. They aren’t interested in dealing with the sin in their life. They are unaware of their indifference and coldness towards God in their lives. As a result, much of what we call ‘Bible believing churches’ end up with a message that is pure saccharin; an artificial sweetener. They leaven the Gospel until it tastes like a homemade southern biscuit with butter and honey. Some Scripture is sweet, I understand that – but – some of it is extremely bitter. Unfortunately, very little is ever heard from the latter side of that truth. This theological misalignment creates a spiritual chemical imbalance that results in a spiritual depression, my friends; you can just write *ALL* of that down and paste it on your refrigerator door. Many times, this prayer by Nehemiah will be your *ONLY* recourse for dealing with the devil. It is never unreasonable or illegitimate to ask God for help and justice....

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

~ After praying to the Lord God of Heaven, Nehemiah got busy working. Yes, we are seated with Christ Jesus in the Heavenlies - but - we’re also told to walk worthy down here. The Christian life is a walk with God as well as warfare; as we saw very clearly in our last report. These are the ways the children of Israel overcame the opposition of ridicule. Be prepared, however, that when Nehemiah’s tactics are used against the enemy, the enemy is going to become extremely angry. Notice the word “*conspired*” as we read on in verse eight....

7 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of

Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wrath,

⁸ And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

⁹ Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

~ Nehemiah could have spouted off something to the effect of, “.... *we’re just trusting the Lord!*” That’s always an easy way to cop-out; what it really means is they’re doing nothing. See, if you really trust the Lord, you’ll be doing something. Nehemiah set a watch to watch these enemies. So many people mouth such pious platitudes when asked to participate in the Lord’s work; and they say things like, “.... *we’ll pray about it.*” I’m sure you have heard that told to you as an answer when you have asked someone to do something to help you. Sure, we are to pray about those things — but — what are you going to do about it *after* you pray? Most people cannot simply say “*no*” when asked to get involved in the Lord’s work. They’re ashamed that they don’t want to. Generally speaking, most people are aware of their capabilities. Most simply *won’t* do anything, deliberately; that’s what’s real. They talk a good game, but that’s all the Lord Jesus Christ is to them — a game....

¹⁰ And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

~ Here, in verse ten, is where Israel had trouble begin from within; and we had better be *SUPER* careful about that. Discouragement from within is extremely dangerous. The devil really can’t hurt us much from outside if we are right with the Lord — but — the devil can hurt us deeply from within. Nehemiah didn’t get angry at this time; however, in our next report, we’re going to see how he deals with trouble from the inside of the city. We’re going to see Nehemiah become extremely angry. For now, let’s just keep moving....

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.

~ It's interesting to me how the enemy announced a surprise attack. That's usually about how utterly stupid the enemy acts when we have the whole armor of God on. It's typically grandstanding and chest-beating they do. Nehemiah has a strategy for counteracting that, too. Those threats were a direct challenge to Nehemiah; and this man isn't about to bow down. He accepts their challenge because he knows his God is with him and fighting for him.

As we read on, every man is placed in the position where he can defend his own family. There's a big difference between defending yourself and seeking revenge. Verse fourteen tells them – and us – to “remember the Lord!” How wonderful it is to know we can trust Him with our lives! “Remember the Lord” was Nehemiah's battle cry. Paul told Timothy to “remember Jesus Christ!” That's our rallying cry today, friends – can you call on the Name of the Lord like that? ~

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.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari concludes this leg of our expedition with the workers working; in one hand, they had a trowel to build — and in the other hand, a sword to defend themselves. I love that passage in verse seventeen, personally. Nehemiah is very practical and purposeful in his ingenuity. Those two characteristics should be found in the spiritual hands of every believer today, too. You can build yourself up in the faith with your trowel, and you can fight off the devil with your sword.

And on a related final note: I *TOTALLY* disagree with those of you who think you are to begin witnessing the minute you are saved. New converts just don't happen to be qualified; and they are never used by God. They don't know how to use the sword and, inevitably, someone will come along and take it from them – and usually kill them with it. New converts are to be tested – not give testimony. Until they actually know something, they are as dangerous as the enemy is. They simply do not have proper, correct and complete experience. Make a note.

These people at the time in which we are studying didn't take a sword in hand until the wall was almost complete. Spurgeon had a magazine called the Sword and the Trowel. It would do many of us well to research that magazine and study it as part of our Bible study. Spurgeon was a great man of God; and much of what I teach you comes directly from him. Either way, verse twenty-one tells us these people worked long hours; from the rising of the sun until the stars appeared at night, to be specific. I'm sure they were very tired and weary in the work of the Lord. They became filthy dirty at work – so, it's a good thing Nehemiah tells us that he, at least, washed his clothes ~

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