

## Fight! – Nehemiah 4:10-14

### I. INTRODUCTION • vs. 7-9

#### A. A Fave

1. Nehemiah has long been one of my favorite books of the Bible.
2. I've turned to it many times over the years because of the incredible insights drawn from this story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
3. There are different layers to Nehemiah; 3 lenses thru which to look at it.
  - a. On the most obvious level, Nehemiah is a straight-forward historical account of the rebuilding of Jerusalem after it's destruction by the Babylonians.
  - b. One another level, it's a great manual on *leadership*. Nehemiah was an *extraordinary* leader.
  - c. But there's a marvelous *spiritual* application as well.

---
4. In our earlier Wednesday studies on Nehemiah we've spelled this out.
  - a. I wish we had the time this morning to do so again; we don't. Let me summarize –
  - b. Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians as judgment for a long history of sin & rebellion against God.
  - c. 70 years after Judah's defeat & exile from their land, they were allowed to return.
  - d. The first to return rebuilt the temple & renewed the worship of God, but they were too few & weak to rebuild the Jerusalem's walls.
  - e. This meant their enemies living nearby could oppress & harass them at will.
  - f. Nehemiah was a Jew who'd risen to prominence in the court of the Persians who'd defeated & replaced the Babylonians as the main power in the region.
  - g. When Nehemiah heard about the sad state of Jerusalem it moved him deeply & he determined he would do what he could to remedy the situation.
  - h. The Persian king granted him authority & all the resources he'd need to rebuild the city.
  - i. When he arrived, he devised a plan & shared it with the people who got fired up & went to work rebuilding the walls & gates.

---
5. In all this, Jerusalem becomes a picture of the believer while Nehemiah foreshadows the HS.
  - a. Sin has had an awful effect on *us*. It's torn down our character & battered holes in our soul.
  - b. The first step in Jerusalem's restoration was rebuilding the temple & establishing the worship of God.
  - c. The first step in our renewal is a relationship with God through faith in Christ.
  - d. But God wants to do *more*. He wants to undo the effects of sin & rebuild the walls of our character.

---
- e. The name Nehemiah means "Comfort of God" pointing to the HS Whom

Jesus called the Comforter who'd come to indwell us and conform us to His image.

6. Keep that all in mind now as we study this morning because the parallels go on between what Nehemiah did & what the Spirit is doing in us.
- 

## **B. The Setting**

1. When the builders had half the wall complete, they hit some snags.
2. As we saw Wednesday, the half-way point is a dangerous time in most projects.
  - a. The sense of *novelty* that accompanied the first half is spent.
  - b. And the *strength* that fueled the work is drained.
  - c. As these workers looked at the wall, they realized they had as much work *to do* as had already been done – but now it was just a boring, back-breaking chore.
3. That's why many people quit half-way; they're tired & over-it.
4. So → In step the bad guys.
  - a. If Nehemiah parallels the work of the Holy Spirit then we ought to expect some enemies, an adversary who doesn't want to see the walls of Jerusalem restored.
  - b. They show up in the person of Sanballat & his friends Tobiah & Geshem; governors of neighboring provinces.
  - c. They'd been unable to stop the rebuilding of the temple & the renewal of worship, but they would do their best to thwart renewed walls because they'd mean the end of their access.
  - d. In the same way, when the devil can't keep someone from being born again,
  - e. He shifts his efforts to keeping the believer from growing in grace.
5. When Nehemiah learned the enemy was planning an attack, he did 2 things – He prayed & he prepared.
  - a. He knew the most important thing he could do was ask God for help.
  - b. Then he took practical measures to deal with an attack by setting guards in key places.
6. There are some great spiritual applications for all this that we looked at Wednesday but we don't have time for this morning.
7. It's vs. 10-14 I want to focus on this morning.

## **II. TEXT**

### **A. V. 10**

**<sup>10</sup> Then Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall."**

1. Remember, this comes at the mid-way point in rebuilding the wall.
2. They weren't just piling up bricks to make something decorative.
  - a. These stones were massive, weighing tons each.
  - b. When complete the wall would be 20 or more ft. high & several ft. thick
  - c. What complicated the task was that they didn't have flat open ground to build on.
  - d. They were building in the same place where the previous wall had stood but had been torn down & now lay in a heap of rubble.

- e. All of that had to be cleared away before they could build.
- 3. When it says the wall was half-way built, don't think of it as half way from the ground up but as half way completed in its circuit.
  - a. The first half had seen the wall go up where the rubble was less & easily removed.
  - b. The last half would be in the hard places where the rubble was extensive.

---

- 4. **Then Judah said**, "The strength of the laborers is failing,"
  - a. **Who** said this? Not a few malcontents or lazy slackers
  - b. **Judah** said this; *everyone, all* the workers.
  - c. The grumblings of a few had infected the whole.
  - d. The zeal & determination that had marked the beginning of the project was gone.
  - e. The consensus now was that the task was too great & would *never* be completed.
- 5. They had **2 reasons** for why they wanted to quit –
  - 1) They were out of gas. They had no more physical or emotional strength.
  - 2) Too much rubbish standing in the way.

---

- 6. This is the same scenario played out in the life of nearly every believer.
  - a. When we first come to faith, God gives us amazing victories over **obvious** sins & we rejoice.
  - b. Everything is new & novel. Our growth seems rapid in that early stage.
  - c. Our spiritual wall gets half way built.
  - d. **Then**—we realize there are **deeper** issues, of the *inner* person that need to be fixed, things that take longer & require *more* grace than we've known till then.
  - e. We look back at the earlier changes that had seemed like such a big deal then; obvious sins we overcame like drinking & carousing [good word].
  - f. But in light of the **deeper** things the Spirit shows need to be changed, those earlier sins seem pretty small.
    - 1) **Now** we're confronted with pride, fear, envy, anger, & the biggest of them all = Self!
    - 2) We see the devastation these deeper sins have wrought in our lives & in those around us.
  - g. That rubble littering the hills of Jerusalem that stood in their way was a **reminder** of the sin & rebellion that caused Jerusalem's destruction.
  - h. In the same way, we come to a place in our walk with God where we know He's made some wonderful changes in us, but as we look ahead to what yet remains, we despair.
    - 1) Like those ancient wall-workers we say,
      - "I don't have the strength & quite frankly I'm too far gone, too broken to be fixed."
      - "I guess I'll have to be content with a half-built wall, a partial work of renewal."
      - "I know the Holy Spirit wants to conform me to the image of Jesus, but I can't make it that far. **It's too hard.**"
- 7. Is it **too hard**? Yes & no. // Hard – yes; too – no.

8. It's not *too* hard because God has promised it won't be. 1 Corinthians 10:13  
**No temptation [better - trial, testing] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tried beyond what you are able, but with the [trial] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

9. The Christian ought not ever say about the trials & challenges of life that they are "too hard" for that is to deny the Lord.

a. Hard? Certainly. But **Good** hard!

b. Because God loves us, is all powerful & all knowing.

c. He only allows into our lives that which will **ultimately bless** us. Notice I said, **ultimately**.

d. Many of the things God uses to bless us don't **appear** as blessing on the front end – it's only later, looking back that many of God's best blessings are seen for what they are.

10. Romans 8:28-29 are crucial here –

**We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. → For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.**

11. Listen, Paul penned this precisely because he knew some things don't look like they're for good when they arrive.

12. They're hard. We need to know they are **Good Hard**.

13. I made the mistake of going out for football my freshman year of high school.

a. I was tiny & not in any way fit for that sport.

b. But I showed up for Summer conditioning and discovered dozens of muscles I didn't know existed – because over the next 2 weeks, everyone of them was so sore I thought I'd been run over by an 18 wheeler.

c. I had weak ankles. Woke up on morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day & when I stood up from my bed, both ankles gave out & I fell on over.

d. They had us do pull ups which I was able to do, not realizing that the skin on my palms wasn't ready for the dozen I ripped off. I dropped to the ground, proud of myself for doing so many, then looked at my hands as layers of skin peeled off.

e. But you know what happened – My ankles got stronger & my hands developed calluses & while I never rose higher than 3<sup>rd</sup> string on our freshman team, I still played ball.

f. At the end of the season, I had become what before I was not.

g. The hardship of conditioning and practices had made me so.

14. Christian, let's stop saying "**too hard**" to the challenges of life & start speaking faith – It's **Good Hard** – **for God is using it all to make us like Jesus.**

15. And you know what – what He's begun, He'll be sure to finish.

**Philippians 1:6 – We can be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in us will keep at it until it's complete on that day when Jesus comes.**

## **B. V. 11**

**11 And our adversaries said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.”**

1. The enemy thought to take advantage of all the rubble that seemed now to block further progress.
2. The workers would never see them coming.

---

3. Many believers don't realize it's often the devil who's reminding them of all the ways they fall short, then suggests it's all too much.
4. His aim is to get them to stop moving forward in faith.
5. Here's how you can discern the difference between the Holy Spirit *convicting* you of something He wants to fix, & the devil *condemning* you in something he wants to keep.
  - a. Conviction draws you **TO** God, condemnation pushes you **away**.
  - b. The Spirit instills *hope* for change, the devil suggests despair, not repair.

## **C. V. 12**

**12 So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, “From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”**

1. Nehemiah heard about the enemy's plans from Who? Jews living *near the enemy*. What?
  - a. What are they doing there? T
  - b. They ought to have been living in Judah & helping in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
2. The phrase “ten times” is a Hebrew idiom for “again & again” as when we say to someone, “The *umpteenth* time.”
3. While veiled as a *warning*, these Jews were actually trying to *discourage* Nehemiah & the workers to get them to leave off the rebuilding.
4. What must have distressed Nehemiah was that this was coming from *his own people* who were siding with the enemy.
  - a. Christian, not everyone who takes that label is walking in the Spirit.
  - b. Some live in the world & walk in the flesh.
  - c. They've built their spiritual wall half way then gave up.
  - d. It bugs them to see others who aren't content with a half-way faith & are going for it all the way.
  - e. The zeal for God of the Spirit-filled believer provokes the anger of the compromised.
  - f. They say, “Come on, don't be such a fanatic. Mellow out. Kick back. Fit in. Don't be such an odd-ball.”
5. No! Go for it Christian! Pour it on! Don't hang back. Don't give in. Press forward!

---

6. The warning of these guys is interesting to me – They say, “You're surrounded!”
7. During WWII, the Nazis launched a major counter offensive in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium.
8. 3 massed German armies completely surrounded the city of Bastogne & the

American 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne.

9. The Battle lasted for a month with huge losses on both sides.
10. It was so brutal those who lived thru it were never the same afterward.
11. Yet the men of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne understood what was at stake & refused to give up.
12. The head of the German high command sent a message to the American commander, General Tony McAuliffe, headquartered in Bastogne. It contained a request for the American surrender.
  - a. McAuliffe read the message, grabbed a pen & wrote one word on it – “Nuts!”
  - b. It was returned to the German commander – who had to find someone to explain to him what “Nuts” meant.
13. Sometime after the battle, one of the soldiers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne was being interviewed & was asked, “What was it like being surrounded by the enemy for a whole month?”
14. His reply was – “We’re paratroopers; we’re *supposed* to be surrounded.”
15. Christian – We’re not in heaven yet! We live in a fallen world that hates God & is becoming more hostile toward Him with every year that passes.
16. We’re surrounded by the enemies of the world, the flesh & the devil.
17. Right now – that’s the way it’s *supposed* to be.
18. Don’t forget this – The Germans *lost* at Bastogne. The Americans prevailed.
19. And God has promised to give us the victory in all *our* battles as we abide in Him.

#### **D. Vs. 13-14**

**13 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.**

1. Knowing an attack was imminent, Nehemiah took practical steps to meet it.
2. If you set yourself to grow in grace, you’ve painted a big target on yourself.
3. One of my favorite *Far Side* cartoons shows 2 deer in a forest.
  - a. On the side of one is a huge target.
  - b. The other deer says to him – “Bummer birthmark, dude.”
4. Satan isn’t happy about your love for God & your determination to reclaim territory lost to him.
5. He’s going to go to work on you. So set yourself in a posture of vigilance.

**14 And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”**

6. Nehemiah once again shows himself a superb leader by rallying the people with just the right words.
7. “Don’t be afraid of the enemy,” he says; but he doesn’t stop there.
8. There’s a *reason* they don’t need to fear. The great & awesome God is with them & He’s pledged Himself to their defense.
9. He’s not promised there won’t be a battle, there *will* be. What there *won’t* be is

*defeat.*

10. God will give them victory, though it will come *through their effort*.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. **Fight!**

1. I want to end with Nehemiah's stirring call here – **Fight!**
2. Fight for your brothers & you families.
3. He stirred them to determined action by reminding them what was at stake → **Everything!**
4. What Nehemiah said to the people of God in that day, the Holy Spirit says to the people of God in this – Fight!
5. Mom & Dad, the world wants your kids.
  - a. It's going after them on many fronts; at school, in music, on TV, at the movies.
  - b. Fight for your family.
  - c. CT – lock door; keep invaders out. // Then invite them in through the cable?
6. Brothers & Sisters, our adversary wants to set us at odds *with one another*.
  - a. He uses all kinds to tactics to divide us; gossip, envy, greed, anger, criticism, unforgiveness.
  - b. Let's not forget the primary way Jesus said the world would know that we belong to Him –
    - 1) Not by crusades, evangelistic outreaches – though great.
    - 2) Not by a bumper sticker or what radio station we listen to – though those also are good.
    - 3) Nor is it by a message T-shirt.
  - c. Jesus said the lost would know we belong to Him by the love we have for one another.
7. So, fight! Resist evil & Determine to Love.