

Building, Battling • Nehemiah 4:11-20

I INTRODUCTION

A. Groundbreaking

1. On January 4th, we had our groundbreaking for our building project
2. It was raining that morning, so we had our 3 regular services here instead of the one big one we were hoping to have at the property
3. After the third service, we went out to the lot and dug the first ceremonial holes
4. That morning, I shared a message from Nehemiah 4 about the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem
5. We saw the parallels between that project and our own
6. We gained some insight in to the challenges that we'll face and how to overcome them
7. Today, I want to return to Nehemiah 4 as we continue our study in this great book
8. We covered verse 1-14 in January, today, want to look at the rest of the chapter

B. Set The Scene

1. Now, before we can pick it up at verse 15, we need to do a little recap
2. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem with both the authority *and* resources to accomplish the task of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls -
3. The only thing he didn't have was the labor
4. So the first thing he did was to survey the damage
5. Then, he went to the leaders of the people and shared his vision with them
6. Their response was enthusiastic and they began to build
7. Verse 6 tells us because the people had a mind to work, the wall quickly went up to half it's height
8. And it was then that trouble set in
 - a. no point in a project is more crucial than the half way point
 - b. a half built wall was no good at all - it was useless
 - c. but when the half way point was reached, the novelty of the work vanished
 - d. the last half of any project is sheer routine - simple toil
 - e. when half the wall was built, and built so quickly, it was easy for the people to step back, admire their work and say.
 - 1) "Wow, that was pretty easy. And look how fast the work went."
 - 2) "I've got other things to do - certainly someone else will take it from here."
 - f. Maybe you've heard this before: Once upon a time there were four men named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody . There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have

done it. But Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about it, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, and Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody and Nobody did the job that Anybody could have done in the first place.

9. Many of us have come a long way in the Christian life
 - a. the Holy Spirit is conforming us to the image of Christ
 - b. but the work is only half done - we're not complete yet, and we won't be till the Jesus comes and completes the work Himself
 - c. we need to hold on and persevere to the end - till we meet the fullness of the stature of Christ
10. The half way point is dangerous for another reason
 - a. it's the last time the enemy can effectively stop the work
 - b. in Jerusalem, when the enemies of the Jews, Sanballat, Tobiah, and their cronies saw the work of rebuilding progressing so rapidly, they became concerned
 - c. they knew they needed to do something, anything, & quickly or they would be shut out
 - d. so when the wall was half way up, and the workers stopped to take a breather, the enemy moved
11. In verses 7-9, we read how they conspired together to come to Jerusalem and attack the workers and stop the project
12. Nehemiah heard of their plans and turned to prayer
13. Then they set guards to protect the workers
14. Let's pick up the story at verse 11 . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 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. Note those words!
2. The enemy was in deadly earnest - this was no game
3. Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem and the others knew that a rebuilt wall meant the end of their ability to harass and mistreat the Jews
4. They knew that it meant an end to their authority and ability to control them
5. So they would not stop at mere harassment - they were dedicated to the cause of stopping the reconstruction of the wall and if that meant murder, then so be it
6. Friends, as we saw in our study last Wednesday evening - Nehemiah is a type of the Holy Spirit
 - a. just as he came from the King with authority and resources to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
 - b. so the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us with all the authority and resources He needs to accomplish the task of rebuilding the walls of our

personality

- c. you see, up to this point, Jerusalem had a rebuilt temple - the worship of God had begun,
 - d. but the walls were in ruins, and because of that, the people had no defense and no identity and no authority over their own lives - they lived at the whim of their enemies
 - e. this is why Nehemiah came - he heard of the distress of his people, and he came to rebuild the walls so the people could defend themselves, so they could discover their identity as the people of God, and to exercise authority over what they allowed into and out of their city
 - f. the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians because of Israel's sin and rebellion
 - g. in the same way, sin has broken down the walls of our lives
 - 1) we've lost the understanding of who we are as men and women whom God created
 - 2) we've lost our ability to protect ourselves from the harassment of the devil
 - 3) and we possess no authority over our own lives because we are slaves of sin and death
 - h. but the moment we are born again, the worship of God is established in our hearts - just as that temple was the first thing to be rebuilt in Jerusalem
 - i. and then the Holy Spirit comes to do a work of rebuilding our walls
 - j. He comes to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ
 - 1) He comes to give us a new identity
 - 2) He comes to make us strong so we can defend ourselves against deception and evil
 - 3) He comes to give us authority so we can be a vital part of what God is doing
 - k. and when that work is well under way, and we have begun to see the fruit of spiritual maturity, then know for certain the devil and his demons are not going to slink away to lick their wounds
 - l. they know it's now or never - and like Sanballat & Tobiah, they will shift gears for an outright attack
 - m. this is no game for the devil - he is deadly earnest - the game is for keeps
 - n. he does not want you to know who you are in Christ because that truth will set you instantly free from the lies he's managed to convince you of and bind you with for years
 - o. he doesn't want you to know your authority in Christ, because once you do it means you become part of that group in the Church against which the very gates of hell cannot stand
 - p. when you discover your authority in Christ, it means the end of his domination, not only of you, but of others as you step out in faith and see the borders of the kingdom of God reclaim ground once held by Satan
7. Christian - if you are sincere in your desire to grow in Christ - know and

understand that that means you have just come to the attention of Sanballat and Tobiah

8. Expect to hear from them - but be careful, because as we read here, they will try to *sneak in* to do their damage

B. Vs. 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 and the workers now got a discouraging report
2. They heard that the impending attack was so vast and well conceived that there was no way they would be able to defend against it
3. And notice who it was who brought this report - from Jews
4. But what Jews? They were Jews who lived near the enemy and were not a part of the work of rebuilding the walls
5. As we walk with the Lord and yield to the work of the Holy Spirit conforming us to the image of Christ,
 - a. not only will we experience opposition from the devil,
 - b. but we will also face the discouraging reports of people who live too close to the enemy, and who are not open to the work of God in their lives
 - c. they will question our zeal
 - d. and try to get us to moderate our desire to be holy
6. When Israel came out of bondage in Egypt, there were many other people that left with them
 - a. this mixed multitude, as they are called, became the cause of much trouble to Israel
 - b. they had left with the Jews because they had seen the power of Israel's God, but they were not really a part of Israel
 - c. and it was this mixed multitude that led in the grumbling and complaining against Moses and God that spread throughout the nation and resulted in so much trouble
7. In the same way, the Church is a mixed multitude
 - a. there are genuine believers in the church,
 - b. and then there are those who are just along for the ride
 - c. and when the going gets tough, they complain and grumble
 - d. this grumbling can easily infect genuine believers
 - e. the unfounded fear of the mixed multitude can disturb the peace of the people of God
8. How did Nehemiah deal with their report?

C. 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.

{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.”

1. Remember that it was Sanballat and Tobiah's desire to stop the rebuilding of the wall
2. So they let their plans of attack be made known to the Jews around them
3. They knew they would go running to Nehemiah to warn him
4. They hoped the threat and fear of attack would drive them off the project
5. But Nehemiah would not let fear stop the work
6. He knew God had brought them to that point, and not just so that they would quit with a half built wall
7. God does not start something to let it die half way done - He ALWAYS completes what He begins > I'm confident of this very thing . . .
8. So Nehemiah took prudent steps to calm the fears of the people and answer the threat of violence
 - a. he set up guards
 - b. and he made sure everyone brought their weapons to work with them
 - c. that way if the enemy came near, they could do battle
 - d. he also reminded them that God was on their side - and if God is for us, who can be against us?
9. How important it is that we be reminded of the fact that God is on our side and that the work that is being done in us is HIS work!
10. What we need to do to insure it goes on without hindrance is to set a guard and watch for how and where the enemy might try to distract us or wound us
 - a. one front he will often attack is our home: marriages, children
 - b. another front is our witness at work or school
 - c. another is our priorities
 - d. all these fronts need to be guarded lest he find an opening and slip in

D. Vs. 15-18

{15} And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and *that* God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

{16} So it was, from that time on, *that* half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and *wore* armor; and the leaders *were* behind all the house of Judah.

{17} Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.

{18} Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet *was* beside me.

1. Can you picture this?
2. Each day as the workers went to their spot on the wall to work, they took their swords and spears with them
3. As they worked, they held a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other
4. They were both building and battling
5. What a fitting picture of the Christian life!
 - a. on one hand, the Holy Spirit is building us so that we are able to

- participate in building the Kingdom of God
- b. and on the other hand, we are battling the hosts of hell
- c. in one hand is the trowel of grace, in the other the sword of the Spirit
- 6. Right here in Port Hueneme we have the Naval Construction Battalion
 - a. their motto is, "*We Build, We Fight*"
 - b. that motto fits us - We Build, We Fight
- 7. But our battle is not with flesh and blood - it is with principalities and powers, with spiritual hosts of evil
- 8. The weapons of our warfare are not physical - they're spiritual, and they possess the power to dismantle the strongholds and fortifications of our enemy
- 9. Of all the armor of God Paul mentions in Ephesians 6, only two of them are offensive in nature - the rest are used for defense
- 10. The two offensive weapons Paul gives are the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and prayer, which is like a spear
 - a. with the word of God we are able to battle the *lies* of the devil
 - b. through prayer we can *send* our faith into the midst of a situation and see God effect His will
- 11. How adept are you at handling the Sword of the Spirit - the Bible?
 - a. when confronted with temptation, can you answer with scripture?
 - b. as Jesus did when He was tempted in the wilderness?
 - c. do you not know the hilt from the point
 - d. has your spiritual sword ever even been taken out of the scabbard?
- 12. How skilled are you with the spear of the Spirit - prayer?
 - a. can you pray to the heart of an issue?
 - b. or are your prayers thrown blindly up?
- 13. The Lord wants each of us to become skilled soldiers so that we can wield the Sword and Spear of the Spirit effectively, and instead of becoming a casualty, we become victors!

E. Vs. 19-20

{19} Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall.

{20} "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

1. Nehemiah, being the gifted leader he was, knew that the enemy would not attack on a wide front
2. Instead, they would probe for a weak and unguarded spot
3. Having found it, they would try to exploit it
4. So Nehemiah kept a trumpeter with him at all times
5. And he gave notice that whenever the people heard the trumpet sound, they were to rally to that point because it meant *that* was the point of attack
6. Nehemiah knew that the success of the work took everyone's participation and protection
7. Though each had been assigned a separate part of the wall to rebuild,
 - a. and though there was a distance between them,
 - b. they all needed to remember that the success of their part was tied to

- the success of everyone's part
 - c. what good was a well built wall if even *one* person had failed to do his part?
 - d. and enemy only needs one hole, one breach in the wall to find access and do great damage
 - e. a wall is only good if it stands intact all the way around
 - f. so while each family worked on it's own section, each family depended on each and every other family to do their part
8. And so it is in the Body of Christ
- a. the strength and success of the Church is dependent on the success and strength of each member
 - b. a chain is only as strong as it's weakest link
 - c. in 1957 the First Brethren Church of Sarasota, Florida had a ground breaking service for it's new building
 - 1) instead of the usual shovels for special people to use in digging, they brought an old one horse plow
 - 2) recalling the words of Jesus, "Take my yoke upon you," they borrowed an old yoke and the two strongest men in the church were hitched up
 - 3) but the two were unable to pull the plow.
 - 4) so the entire Building Committee grabbed the ropes , but even then the plow did not move.
 - 5) other church leaders were added, the elders, the deacons, and the Sunday school teachers, but still the plow did not move.
 - 6)it wasn't until every member of the congregation took a hold of the rope that the plow finally broke free and began to dig
 - d. too many churches expect the pastors and elders to do all the work
 - e. if we want to see progress we must all work and battle together.
9. We must be diligent to come to one another's aid when one of us is being attacked
10. We need to rally to each other's side and do battle when battle is called for
11. Several years ago, we noticed that there were many families in the church who were going through tough times
- a. marriages were in trouble
 - b. children were wiggling out
 - c. financial pressures were building
 - d. it was very obvious that we were in a season of domestic attack
 - e. so we had what we called a "Trumpet Night"
 - f. as the leaders that God has called for Calvary Chapel, we sounded the alarm and rallied the men of the church to meet together to pray, do battle and take seriously the responsibility to build that part of the wall God had given us
 - g. what was exciting was to see how the Lord brought an end to that season of opposition as the men returned to their homes to build and battle on the home front

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Nehemiah's Priority*

1. As we close, I want you to notice something
2. Through all of this, Nehemiah never stopped the work of rebuilding
3. He kept at it - even when there was a threat of attack
4. You see, Nehemiah knew his mission - build the walls
5. His mission wasn't to stand all day and wait for an attack
6. If the threat of an attack could cause Nehemiah to shift his focus from building to battling, then the enemy would be content to do nothing all day but make threats - all so that the work would not go forward as the workers stood guard and waited
7. Nehemiah would not play their game - he knew what was up - the enemy only wanted the building stopped
8. Christian - God is doing a work in you, a work of building
9. Don't let yourself be distracted from that work by anything!
10. Nehemiah's priority is our priority - to rebuild the walls - to see ourselves conformed to the image of Christ!
11. Never give up - Never, never, never, never, never!
12. And know this, one day soon, our heavenly Nehemiah will turn to the angel next to him and tell him to blow the trumpet, and you and I will be called out of the midst of our building to rally to Him as He prepares to come and put an end to the enemy once and for all!