

Working & Warring (2)

Text: Nehemiah 4:7-15

Introduction:

1. This chapter: The battle erupts as the walls are being built. In the Christian life have to learn to be servants & soldiers, builders & battlers, workers & warriors. **Both** are necessary.
2. The enemy's attacks are relentless, persistent and they intensify as the work sees success.
3. The timing is at the half way point when the strain of the load begins to set in
4. In this chapter, we note the two waves of attack used by the enemy to try and stop the work of God: 1. Contempt 2. Conspiracy

In this lesson we note the second phase of the attack (conspiracy) and how it was overcome:

I. The Provocation of the Conspiracy (Vs. 7-8, 11)

The progress of the work arouses the fury of the enemy and the battle intensifies.

A. The People (Vs. 7)

1. Their Identity
 - a. North: Sanballat & Samaritans
 - b. East: Tobiah & Ammonites
 - c. South: Geshem & Arabians
 - d. West: Ashdodites (Philistines)
 - e. The people of God were literally **surrounded** by enemies. We often find ourselves in a similar place. But we need to be reminded that we are not just surrounded by enemies, we are also surrounded by the Lord!
 - i. Psalm 34:7 *"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."*
 - ii. Illustration: 2 Kings 6:14-16 – *"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."*
2. Their Unity
 - a. Note: They all conspired 'together' (Vs. 7)
 - b. These factions often in conflict with one another but they united quickly against God, His people and His work.
 - c. Illustration: The many faces of the world united against Christ at His crucifixion
 - i. Pilate and Herod united (Luke 23:12)
 - ii. Civil and Ecclesiastical authorities united
 - iii. Sadducee and Pharisee united

B. The Plan (Vs. 8)

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1. To Fight – while Christians waste time arguing whether we should be involved in the battle, the enemy is resolved to wage war!
2. To Hinder – Their resolve was to stop the work of God. "...cause the work to cease." (Vs. 11)
3. To Infiltrate (Vs. 11) – The enemy would seek to use subtility and surprise (guerilla warfare)
 - i. This is how the wicked one works. E.g. The apostates in Jude 1:4 are described as "certain men crept in unawares". From the beginning, Satan has used subtility to attack the people of God (Gen. 3)
 - ii. "Though the enemy likes to operate secretly by sneaky conduct and disguised doings, it is still very difficult to convince church people of this feature of the enemy. Many church folk seem to not want to see evil in anything and refuse to believe the warnings given by the men of God of the hidden evil in so many things today. But sticking our head in the sand to ignore the ways of evil is only to give evil a great advantage over us." John G. Butler

II. The Promoters of the Conspiracy (Vs. 10-12)

The enemy from without utilizes sympathizers from within. The heat of the battle tends to bring to surface the weak points amongst the people of God.

A. The Complainers (Vs. 10)

1. The source: Tribe of Judah
 - a. Judah was the strong, kingly tribe! Opposition often comes from the most unexpected sources
 - b. Wiersbe: "In over forty years of ministry, I have learned that, in the Lord's work, discouragers are often doubters and compromisers. There is usually something wrong in their spiritual walk."
 - c. Their problem was genuine but their conclusions were wrong.
2. The motive: Judah's family connections!
 - a. Tobiah had a close relationship with Judah through his wife and daughter in law (6:18-19) and he knew just how to pull the family strings to his advantage. "The ties of marriage were stronger than their bonds of commitment to the Lord" (Wiersbe)
 - b. Marriages with the heathen were forbidden by God for His people.
 - c. Butler: "Some of Nehemiah's worst problems from within the camp came from people involved with bad marriages. Unsanctified marriages are always a pain in the neck to the work of God. We have personally found in our over forty years of ministry that those who are problems (the murmurers, complainers, dissidents, discouragers etc...) in the church frequently have marriage problems. In fact,

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marriage problems are almost always present with troublemakers in the church. Either the marriage is a forbidden one (such as a saved person marrying an unsaved person or a divorced person remarrying), or the marriage does not follow Biblical guidelines (such as the wife wears the pants and is the dominate one in the marriage and not the husband).

- d. Warning! We have a tendency to invoke the “its family” exception clause in order to make compromises that violate God’s Word. But this exception clause is not found in Scripture! The real test of the fabric of your Christian walk is whether you are willing to uphold the Scriptures when it is going to cut across the most sensitive of human emotions. If we are prepared to allow our emotions to lead us with our family problems, Satan will use it to his full advantage to damage God’s work.
- e. Matthew 10:37-38 *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”*

B. The Compromisers (Vs. 11-12)

1. The enemy voices their threat in Vs. 11
2. Those living near the enemy become carriers of the propaganda (Vs. 12). The enemy filled their ears with tales of conquest.
3. The people who become launching pads for Satanic darts are those who have positioned themselves closest to the enemy and compromise. The worldly Christian is a ready tool for Satan.
4. “ten times” = this phrase is sometimes used in the O.T. as a figure of speech meaning many times instead of a literal number (Num. 14:27, Dan 1:20). Our figure of speech “umpteen times” would convey the thought. The thought conveyed is that wherever the people turned, the enemy would attack them.

III. The Prevailing over the Conspiracy (Vs. 9, 13-15)

A. Intercession (Vs. 9)

1. Prayerfulness (9a)
 - a. Prayer is not a last resort, it is a first resort and a powerful weapon against the enemy. Even in Nehemiah’s day where there was a physical component to the battle (actual fighting), the war was still primarily of a spiritual nature. David & Goliath another example of this (1 Samuel 17)
 - b. “our God” = they had a personal relationship with the Almighty
2. Watchfulness (9b)
 - a. We are to be alert and discerning of spiritual dangers
 - b. Christ exhorted the disciples to “watch and pray”

B. Fortification (Vs. 13)

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1. Standing Firm (public stand)
 - a. Strategic places on the wall guarded.
 - b. A position of altitude on the wall would do two things: 1. It would help God's people see the enemy 2. It would help the enemy see God's people and be deterred
 - c. Nehemiah again positions people according to their families. We need to learn to see the connection between our collective stand as a body of believers and the safety and protection of our families.
2. Standing Armed (equipped)
 - a. Our weapons not carnal.
 - b. Ephesians 6 – believe is equipped of God for spiritual battle

C. Exhortation (Vs. 14)

The men the primary ones addressed (Vs. 14). The men are to take a lead in standing on the wall and fighting the enemy.

1. Don't Fear!
 - a. Fear a major component of the enemy's tactics
 - b. So often Scripture exhorts us to "fear not"
2. Have Faith!
 - a. The battle is the Lord's! (1. Samuel 17:47)
 - b. We are to focus on His might and power. God is described as 'great' and 'terrible' (same description as 1:5) 'terrible' means "one to be feared, revered"
3. Go Fight!
 - a. Fight for your brethren in the Lord
 - b. Fight for your family – sons, daughters, wives
 - c. Fight for your homes

D. Exertion (Vs. 15)

1. The enemy's plots were successfully foiled by the public stand of God's people.
2. The work was now able to resume. The battle is not an end in itself. The purpose for the fight is to maintain and continue the work of God
3. Contend for the faith so that you can then build yourself up on your most holy faith (Jude). Battle so that you might then build!

Conclusion:

1. Which side of the battle are you on? Will you take a stand?
2. Are we fighting the battle with spiritual weaponry or the weapons of the flesh?