

in prayer, and then persevere in God's work. As a result, Satan will be defeated, and God's work will be done.

Invitation for Salvation

One of the reasons that Christ came to earth, went to the cross, and returned to heaven was to provide victory over sin (I John 3:5) and over Satan (I John 3:8). The victory has been provided, but you don't possess it until you claim Christ as your Saviour. (cf. Col. 1:12-14).

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THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

The War of the Wall

Nehemiah 4:1-6:15

Part One: "Satan Attacks from the Outside" (4:1-23)

Introduction

In our previous message (2:12-3:32) we learned that when God's people decide to build for God (2:18), Satan always starts a battle against the work of God's people (2:19). To complete God's work brings a victory for the Lord and His people (cf. 6:15 with 6:16), but a defeat for Satan. Thus, building for God involves battling with Satan.

In our warfare with Satan "the battle is the Lord's" (I Sam. 17:47). The believer must depend upon the power and the provision of God to experience victory over Satan in Christian service for the Lord. For example, God is able to grant spiritual wisdom to the believer so that he is "not ignorant of his /Satan's/ devices" (II Cor. 2:11). Knowledge of the enemy's "devices" (II Cor. 2:11; Greek noēmata thought out plans", or "designs"). is necessary "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us" (II Cor. 2:11). The Bible also speaks of "the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). The Greek word for "wiles" is methodeias from which our English word "methods" is derived.

Satan is never mentioned directly in Nehemiah, but we see his tools (Sanballat, Tobiah, and company) and his tactics operating at full speed ahead against the work of God's people; in this case, the rebuilding of the walls. In Nehemiah 4:1-23 we see how Satan operates from the outside to try to hinder and to stop God's work. We also learn from God's servant, Nehemiah, how to counter-attack Satan and gain perfect victory over him (cf. also Eph. 6:10-18).

Outline and Comments

1. The first attack: Satanic mockery to discourage God's people (4:1-3).

Satan's attack from the outside begins by mocking or making fun of the Jews and their work for the Lord (1-3). Our God is "the God of all comfort (or

encouragement/7" (II Cor. 1:3), and He is 100% optimistic about His work. Satan is the god of discouragement, and he is extremely pessimistic about God's work as we would expect. What is your attitude toward God's work through Grace Bible Church?

The First Defense (4:4-6).

Nehemiah first used prayer (vv. 4-5 cf. Eph. 6:18) to God that He would launch a deserved counter-attack against the enemies. Note that attacks against God's work are attacks against God's person and provoke Him to anger (v.5). Prayer was followed by perseverance in building the wall (v.6). When we have a mind to pray, God gives us "a mind to work" (v.6). Quitters do not succeed. Stick-to-it-ness is God's policy for God's people.

2. The Second Attack: Conspiracy to fight to hinder God's people (4:7-8; 10-13).

Satan has failed to discourage God's people by insults from the outside, so now he changes tactics and seeks to distract God's people by interruptions from the outside. Satan also believes in perseverance (cf. Matt. 4:1-11). If at first he doesn't succeed, he will try, try, and try again. Note the intensification of the second attack as compared to the first attack. In verse 1, "he was wroth/angry" but in verse 7, "they were very wroth/angry". The more that God works through us, the hotter the war with Satan gets. In verse 10 some of the people of Judah helped Satan's attack. Not all discouragement and pessimism comes from Satan. Some of it comes from people of God who aren't aware of Satan's devices! Satan also used some of God's people to brainwash the others with fear (vv.11-12). Some of the people began to break spiritually under the Satanic pressure.

The Second Defense (4:9, 14-23).

Once again Nehemiah resorts to prayer (v.9a) in his defence against Satan. New Satanic attacks call for renewed prayer.

Nehemiah was a practical man and recognized the

reality of the physical danger, so he provided protection for the workers (vv.9b, 13-14, 16-22). Nehemiah's exhortation, "Be not ye afraid of them" (v.14) was based on God's many exhortations to His servants to "fear not" (cf. Gen. 15:1; and other passages from a concordance). See also the blessed promise in Prov. 29:25) "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whose putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Also note the combination of human responsibility, "fight for your brethren, etc." (v.14), and the divine promise, "Our God shall fight for us" (v.20 cf. I Sam. 17:47).

In verse 15 prayer to God (v.9) resulted in defeat of Satan's plans (cf. illustration in II Sam. 15:31; 17:14). Instead of God's work being interrupted, God's work went forward (v.15). God sees what goes on at Satan's planning table. Get this principle! Nehemiah committed the work of Satan to God, and God defeated Satan for Nehemiah and the people. Nehemiah and the people persevered in the work of God committed to them. Results: Satan was defeated and the work of the wall continued. Do not let Satan distract you from God's work by getting you to fight against him in the power of your flesh (cf. 6:3; Eph. 6:12, II Cor. 10:4). If you do, God's work will be neglected, and you will be defeated!

Note how the people worked with one hand and warred with the other hand (vv.16-22).

Nehemiah and some of his associates were outstanding examples of dedication and personal sacrifice (v.23). They believed that God's work must go forward regardless of the sacrifice (cf. Phil. 2:17). They also believed in victory over Satan and sin at any cost (cf. Heb. 12:4).

Challenge to Believers

Like Nehemiah we shouldn't be discouraged from God's work by insults from Satan, and we shouldn't be distracted from God's work by interruptions from Satan. Positively, we should commit the work of Satan to God