

Beyond Addictions

Free to live a new life in Christ Jesus



Building to Win the Battle

Lesson 11

The God of heaven Himself will prosper us;
therefore we His servants will arise and build,
but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 2:11

You have started a good work and you have come a long way since you began this course. You are being transformed by the renewal of your mind. You understand addiction is a form of idolatry, voluntary slavery, life-dominating sin and adultery against the Lord. You also know the One who defeated it at the cross and gave you the Holy Spirit to guide you into the new life you have in Christ Jesus. Having enjoyed some success in the battle, you should not be surprised when the enemy mounts an attack to drag you back into the pit where he once held you captive. He is not happy about your new life in Christ and he isn't interested in having you draw others out of his trap. So he tempts and he attacks to draw you back or to have you live in fear.

What can you do about it? In order to answer that question, I want to take you back 2,435 years to the time when Nehemiah was serving as chamberlain and advisor to the king of the Medo-Persian Empire and the Jews were returning to Israel. Like you, they were at a critical point of transition. The people of Israel were trying to re-establish themselves in their homeland after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Their state was similar to yours as you re-establish your freedom after being held captive to addiction.

This is the story of a construction job that God was doing in the City of Jerusalem. It is a parallel of the construction job that He is doing in your life. The greatest difference is that yours will last longer. You may think that a literal construction project involving wood and stone would be more real than a spiritual project that goes unseen; however, the truth of the matter is that the

spiritual construction project in your life will outlast the one that was completed in Jerusalem. Why? Because the walls of Jerusalem were effective for a short period of time but they were destroyed. The Bible teaches that the construction work being done in your spirit and soul will last forever!

By studying this literal construction job in Jerusalem, the Bible teaches us a lot about the spiritual one taking place in you.

Let's examine it to see what we can learn. During the time of Nehemiah in 444 BC, a city was known by its walls. Walls protected people from enemy armies, thieves and robbers. Gates were closed at night to keep the enemy from creeping in and creating confusion or staging an all out attack. Walls were great defensive barriers during war. If an enemy was going to attack your city, he would first send in spies to find the weaknesses in your walls. Strong walls not only protected a city during attack, they often discouraged the enemy from attacking at all. "The walls are too strong, we can't get through." People who built strong walls were perceived as a mighty people; they were wise, they were advanced, they were skillful, and they had great physical strength.

As strong walls were associated with a strong city and a great people, weak walls were associated with a defenseless city and weak people. If they had any strength, they would have built walls to protect them. So, a lack of strong walls meant that the people were lazy, weak, poor and easy targets for the enemy.

The same is true today. Satan, your real enemy, knows your strengths and weaknesses. He is looking for lust, pride and other weaknesses so that he will know how to tempt, how to attack. He also knows that your only real protection lies in Christ. If you want to keep the enemy out, then remain in Christ and permit Him to build a strong foundation in your life. As it says in Colossians 2:6-7, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." You need to continue building, digging deep to lay a good foundation and building strong walls to protect you from the attack of the enemy.

There are men who believe that they are tough enough to withstand Satan but real strength doesn't lie in pride; it doesn't lie in leather, tattoos and bulging muscles either. It is found in Jesus Christ. The enemy recognizes men who trust in their own strength; he knows that they are weak willed and easy targets for drug addiction, booze and whatever else he wants to throw at them. Do you remember Samson?

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Unfortunately, the people of Israel were in a position of real weakness when Hanani visited Nehemiah.

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." So it was, when I heard these words that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:1-4

Hanani had returned from Jerusalem to the Persian winter palace at Shushan. Nehemiah was anxious to hear about the Jews who had returned to Israel. As you can see, he was pretty upset with this news from Jerusalem. He had hoped to hear that the people were faring well since returning to the homeland. Ezra had led a group of Israelites back into the land 14 years earlier. This was the second mission that had returned to Israel during the previous 95 years. When Hanani told Nehemiah about the walls, he knew that the people were suffering, weak and beaten down.

At times, I will ask someone about an old friend whom I have worked with in prison. Most of the time, the news is good. Sometimes it is pretty troubling, "Well, he lost his job because he wasn't coming in on time. He's hanging out with some of the same guys that he knew a few years ago. And so-and-so saw him coming out of a little bar with this young girl on his arm the other night." Immediately, I know how this guy is doing. The walls are broken down and he is open to whatever the enemy wants to bring into his mind and heart. I know that if things aren't turned around, his return to the bondage of addiction will follow.

Nehemiah's response should be our response. He wept, mourned and he prayed.

And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. Remember, I pray, the word that You

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commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name. Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.'" For I was the king's cupbearer. Nehemiah 1:5-11

Notice the aspects of Nehemiah's prayer:

- He worshipped the Lord (verse 5)
- He confessed his sins and the sins of the people (verses 6-7)
- He interceded for them based upon God's Word, specifically His promises to them (verses 8-9).
- He asked for God to lead him and to bless him as he approached the king (verse 11).

How does this apply to your situation? Your first reaction to any temptation should be prayer. Victory comes when God intercedes for you. Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us of the power of prayer and its effects in our own soul.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In James 4:5-7 we are reminded of God's call to humility and of what we should do about it.

Therefore He says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

In humility, you submit to God. As a result, the devil flees. As you draw near to God, He draws near to you. Cleanse your hands and your hearts in repentance to Jesus Christ. Remember

that you are promised in I John 1:9 that God will honor your confession by forgiving you and cleansing you from all unrighteousness.

Pray. Repent. Worship the Lord. Ask for His help.

Nehemiah's Initial Actions

In Nehemiah 2:1-8 you find that after 120 days of prayer, his opportunity came to approach the king. Because of the time spent with the Lord, Nehemiah was prepared and the Lord gave him favor. So Nehemiah's request to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls was approved and he was ready when he received the king's blessing to return to Jerusalem. Having his heart right before God, Nehemiah was prepared. He was "prayed up" and he knew what steps to take next as he operated in the wisdom of the Lord.

Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

Nehemiah 2:9

God granted Nehemiah favor in ways that he could not have seen before he took this step of faith. God is going before you too. He will make a way for you to work, He will provide a safe place to live and a good Bible-teaching local church; He will provide for all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

Nehemiah 2:11

This is the first mention in Nehemiah of the enemies of Israel. Sanballat and Tobiah noticed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the ones that they had held in bondage, and they weren't happy about it. Your enemy isn't happy about your new life either and he isn't interested in letting you seek the well-being of the ones you love.

The appearance of the enemy didn't surprise Nehemiah and it shouldn't surprise you either. Even though you experience the favor of God, you will still experience attacks from the enemy. This is a normal part of Christian living.

In Nehemiah 2:11-16 he describes his arrival at Jerusalem and his tour of the city to see the damage to the wall and gates. Notice that Nehemiah didn't make an open show of his actions. Neither should you. You don't need to announce to the world that you have been rehabilitated and it's different this time. You don't have to sell people on how well you are doing as a new believer.

Just keep your eyes focused on the Lord and follow Him. Then they will see the work that God is doing – transforming you by the renewing of your mind, and conforming you into His likeness by the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, by maintaining your focus on Jesus you are less likely to be fooled by the tricks of the enemy. Like Nehemiah, you can simply let the work speak for itself.

As you read through the account in this book you will see that one of the keys to Nehemiah's success was that he consistently kept his focus on the Lord and on the work that the Lord called him to do. He did not allow the distractions of the enemy or the negative influences in the city affect him. His circumstances did not dictate his thoughts or actions. He allowed his relationship with God to guide him through every situation. As Christians, God has given you and me the Holy Spirit to do the same for us and we do not have to allow the situations of your life to dictate our thoughts or actions either.

In verses 17-18, Nehemiah gave the people of Jerusalem a reality check.

Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.
Nehemiah 2:17-18

Nehemiah told them the whole truth. Their lives were a mess, and they were living in subjection to an enemy who wanted to destroy them. Maybe they had forgotten how bad the situation was. It's easy to grow comfortable with misery, to start thinking that addiction is normal and that you will always have to contend with it. Then you fall victim to the whole set of circumstances that go along with addiction – lust, pornography, illicit sex, poor work habits, self-obsession, an all-around sinful lifestyle. As you become more discouraged your thinking is dulled and you believe that life will always be that way.

You need the kind of wake up call that Nehemiah gave the Israelites in Jerusalem. Take an inventory of yourself. Stop telling yourself how well you are doing if you are still entertaining the enemy in your mind through lust and false remembrances of how much fun you had when you were in addiction. Give up the "little indiscretions" you may be having now with a toke on a joint or an occasional drink. Get rid of the pornography. Face the facts, if these things still exist, you are opening yourself up to more serious problems later. Pray Psalm 139:23-24 to the Lord and ask for His help.

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Nehemiah also told them the good news and you need to know it too. God had given him favor with the king and brought him back to Jerusalem to rebuild! You need to remember that God is on your side, that He will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). Remember that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from all sin (I John 1:7), that the Holy Spirit dwells in you (I Corinthians 3:16). You may be in a pickle but God is able to deliver you out of any addiction and the lifestyle that goes along with it. And II Chronicles 16:9 says that He wants to do it! It says, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." So trust Him with your whole heart and see what He does.

If you are a believer, read the foundational verses from this course and remember:

1. You are a new creation in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)
2. God has given you all you need in the knowledge of Him (II Peter 1:3)
3. You can be completely changed by the renewal of your mind (Romans 12:2)
4. You are under new management and do not need to give in to the fears of the past. (I Corinthians 6:19-20)
5. You can defeat temptation by taking thoughts captive (II Corinthians 10:3-5) and take the way out that God provides (I Corinthians 10:13).
6. God is for you (Jeremiah 29:11)
7. Keep the faith, don't quit (Galatians 6:9)

These verses will strengthen your hands, as well as your heart and mind, for the work we need to do. Let's rise up and build!

Read verses 19-20 and note the response of Nehemiah's enemies when they heard of the work he had planned. Check out his response:

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem." Nehemiah 2:19-20

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Has the world ever laughed you to scorn? “Yea, yea, so you’re trying this Christian thing now. You’ll be back in two weeks.” “You’re a fool to give up all of this for a bunch of rules and a church full of hypocrites.” “What are you going to try after this fails?” Don’t let their opinions worry you.

Notice how Nehemiah responded to the scorn of the enemy. He looked them in the eye and set the record straight, “The God of heaven will prosper us, therefore, we his servants, will arise and build.” AMEN! The only opinion that matters is God’s. Focus on Christ. He who has begun a good work in you will complete it. This is God’s work, not man’s work. You have the privilege of being called by God to participate in it. *Since you know that this is His work, you can also be sure that it will succeed. So, arise and build!*

If you are reading this book, I believe that you have a desire to clear away the rubble of your past and to build a good foundation for your future. That’s good. Now, set the record straight, and don’t give Satan, your enemy, any place in your heart to draw you into compromise.

Remember Colossians 2:9-10; “For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” This isn’t a battle that we are leading. Christ is leading the charge and we are complete in Him. The God of heaven will prosper you in the battle. That is why you can arise and you will be victorious in building the wall! It is His might, His power, His Spirit that gives the victory. Your only responsibility is to be obedient to enter into the work He is doing.

Note the last thing that Nehemiah told their enemies, “but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem”. Remember that Satan, your enemy, has no heritage or right or memorial in you either. Any inheritance he had was lost to him when you surrendered your life to Jesus. You now live by faith in the Son of God who died for you. Satan has no right in you; you have been bought by the blood of the Lamb. You don’t need to respond when he reminds you of your past because you are a new creation in Christ Jesus and those old things are passed away (II Corinthians 5:17).

Satan should have no memorial in you either so get rid of anything that reminds you of the sinful past. Throw out the magazines, the bong pipes, the beer signs and anything else that might remind you of the past.

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The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says, “Nehemiah brought the task—both in the eyes of Judah and his enemies—into clear focus. Their dependence was not to be on their abilities, human resources, or personal genius. Their hope was in the God of heaven!”¹ So is yours.

Let’s bring the task into clear focus. Your life is being rebuilt. The enemy who stands against you may be strong but the God of heaven will prosper you; therefore you will arise and build!

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¹ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Cook Communications Ministries, pages 677-678

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Free to Live a New Life In Christ



Building to Win the Spiritual Battle

Assignment 11

Name: _____

1. The sign reads, "Caution: God (and men) at work." This is a message that Satan, your enemy, doesn't like to see. How have you seen him attempt to stop the work that the Lord has been doing in your life since you started taking Beyond Addictions? _____

2. Where does your real protection come from as you fight the battle against temptation and sin?

3. Why was Nehemiah discouraged when he heard about the condition of the wall around Jerusalem? _____

4. Compare the condition of the wall around Jerusalem with the conditions that you have seen in the lives of other men. Have you witnessed a time when you saw the walls of protection crumbling in someone else's life? _____ What did you see that caused you to be concerned?

5. What was Nehemiah's first response when he heard the news from Hanani? _____

What did he pray about? _____

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6. On page 9, it says “Nehemiah told them the whole truth. Their lives were a mess and they were living in subjection to an enemy who wanted to destroy them.” Are there any areas in your life where this is true? _____ If so, what are they? _____

What do you need to do about them? _____

7. Nehemiah also told them why the work would succeed. What did he say? _____

8. The people responded with hope and said, “Let us rise up and build.” You have also heard some good news that should encourage you. Tell me, among the scripture passages quoted on page 10 and listed on page 11, which mean the most to you right now? _____

9. Take Nehemiah 2:20 personally. What does it mean when you tell Satan that he has no heritage or right or memorial in you anymore? _____

Are there any areas in your life where you need to remove the “memorials” of your past life? _____

If so, what should you do about them? _____

Once you complete this worksheet, mail it to:

Free In Christ Prison Ministries
PO Box 1492
Yanceyville, NC 27379

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We will review your answers and return this sheet to you along with the next lesson. Study the Foundational verses included in this chapter and continue to allow the Lord to transform you by the renewing of your mind. People are praying for you!