

Beyond Addictions

Free to live a new life in Christ Jesus



Continuing the Work that Jesus Christ has Begun in You

Lesson 12

Remember the Lord, great and awesome,
and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters,
your wives, and your houses.

Nehemiah 4:14

In chapter 11, you began building walls in Christ to strengthen and protect you from the attack of the enemy. In chapter 12 we will continue the work, and you will begin to see some of the enemy's tactics that he employs to frustrate the good work that the Lord is doing in your life. Nehemiah's construction project took place 2,435 years ago and the methods of the enemy haven't changed. Let's see what Sanballat and his gang attempted to stop the work.

Understanding the devices of the enemy.

You seldom have any problem with Satan or with people who run with him until you start going against the flow. As soon as you do, you can expect retaliation. Don't be surprised when the spiritual attack comes and don't quit. Remember, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (I John 4:4).

He will attempt to discourage and ridicule your efforts.

The first thing that Sanballat and the boys did was to ridicule the effort that the Israelites were making to change their circumstances. The goal was to discourage them from even trying to build the wall.

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But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish-stones that are burned?" Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall." Nehemiah 4:1-3

Notice Sanballat's response to the work that the Lord was doing in Jerusalem:

1. He was angry.
2. He mocked the work they were doing.
3. He made fun of their "feeble" effort.
4. He had a friend who joined in with him. (Enemies of God seldom stand alone.)

Does any of this sound familiar? Maybe you have heard this, "What do you mean, you're moving out? You'll be back, there's no way you can live without it." "Go on down to your little church folk, when they find out what kind of person you really are, they won't have anything to do with you either and you'll come running back." So don't be surprised, some people are just going to mock the work that the Lord is doing in your life.

How should you respond? How did Nehemiah respond?

Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders. So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. Nehemiah 4:4-6

Nehemiah prayed, and he continued doing the work the Lord called him to do. As a result, the work began to succeed. It will succeed with you too.

If Nehemiah had stopped when he was ridiculed, then Sanballat would have known how to stop the work anytime he wanted. All he had to do was throw a little sand in Nehemiah's face and he would run away. Instead, Nehemiah remained steadfast in the work and prayed for God to defend the people of Israel as they engaged in the work that God desired them to complete.

Satan, your enemy, is a master of discouragement. He will attempt to pry open the door of your mind with his stick of discouragement, then he can pour in most anything else that will tempt

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you to quit. While whispering thoughts of failure or depression in one ear he will tempt you with his bag of dope or pills or booze or pornography as the solution to the problem. Don't buy into it. Remember the promises of God. Your sins have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus (I John 1:7, 9). He who has started a good work in you will complete it (Philippians 1:6). Jesus will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

In verse six you see another reason for the success of the project, "the people had a mind to work." Remember the value of self-discipline from the scripture passages we studied in chapter ten. The message in Hebrews 10:35-36 will put a little steel in your soul; it says "do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." Note that it is *after* you have done the will of God that you receive the promise.

You must have a mind to work. Maintain your discipline in Bible reading, prayer and fellowship with solid Christians. Don't play around with "little" sins in your mind. Catch those little tempting thoughts before you begin dwelling on them and cast them out. When the enemy brings temptation to mind, respond with prayer and praise to Jesus. Have a mind to work and you will succeed.

He will employ confusion.

The Israelites began to succeed. The wall was starting to look more like a wall and less like a pile of rocks and sticks. So the enemies of Israel turned up the heat. When you show some success, your enemy will turn up the heat too.

Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night. Nehemiah 4:7-9

Sanballat, Tobiah and the boys started focusing more effort on them. They made plans to attack and to create confusion.

Confusion is another weapon that the enemy uses against those of us who have escaped his prison of addiction. He may actually try to convince you that it was better when you were drinkin', druggin' and chasing women. Physical cravings may surface for the first time in a long while. He may bring a girlfriend or boyfriend from the old days around to see you. He may tempt you with

an R-rated movie. He wants you to wonder if you are missing something. He wants to confuse you.

How should you respond? Like Nehemiah, make your prayer unto God, and set a watch against the enemy day and night (that means ALL of the time). Remember that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. In John 8:44, Jesus says, "There is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own for he is a liar, and the father of it".

If you are feeling confused, remember that God is not the author of confusion. When doubt or fear rises in your heart, seek the Lord for clear direction. Sit down with an open Bible and pray. God will hear you and He will direct your path.

How do we set a watch against the enemy?

Nehemiah established a physical system to guard against the enemy. How can you set up a spiritual watch against your enemy? Apply the Word.

1. Take thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:3-5).
2. You remember that the problem you are facing is due to the enemy tempting a lust in your heart and you recall that falling to it will not bring real joy but it brings death (James 1:14-15).
3. You decide in your heart to be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer so you lay aside all of the evil around you and in meekness you receive God's Word that is able to deliver you (James 1:21-22).
4. Remember the adulterous woman in Proverbs 9 and that the door to her home may look like it leads to pleasure but it actually leads to death (Proverbs 9:18).
5. Remember the covenant with your eyes, why should you even think upon a maid? (Job 31:1).
6. Focus your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross in order that you and I could be saved (Hebrews 12:2).

Unfortunately, the laborers took their eyes off of the Lord so Sanballet and Tobiah's tactics were somewhat effective. As a result, the people became discouraged and confused..

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." Nehemiah 4:10

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They began focusing their eyes on the rubbish rather than focusing on the Lord and continuing the work. This rubbish was made up of the broken down stone and wood from the old wall that lay in piles. It needed to be removed before the new wall could be built. You may still have some rubbish in your life too but God is not telling you to focus on the failures of the past. Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us how to succeed in our walk of faith. It says, "Fix your eyes on JESUS." This is the key! Your life of faith in Christ leads to success as you dwell on Him rather than being discouraged and confused by the problems of the past.

The enemy has used discouragement and confusion for centuries as a means of stopping the servants of God. David became discouraged at times. Moses, Peter, Paul and many other great men of faith lost their perspective too. So do we. It generally happens when we take our eyes off of Jesus and focus on our circumstances.

Psalm 1:1-2 says. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." The enemy wants you to listen to the advice of the ungodly, to stand with unbelievers, and to sit with the scornful. He knows that this will discourage you. The Bible says that the way to true happiness is NOT to do these things but instead to delight in God's Word, meditating on it day and night. Fix your eyes on Jesus, NOT on the rubble of the past.

The enemy will try to stir up fear.

Seeing the discouragement, the enemy chose this time to pour a little gas on the flame in the hopes that all of God's work would go up in smoke.

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." 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." Nehemiah 4:11-12

Fear is a prime weapon of the enemy. He is subtle, he says, "He won't even know that I am inside the wall. I'll finish him off before he ever finishes the job." As was the case in Jerusalem, he has "friends" who will try to discourage you, too. He used them to spread rumors about the failure of the work elsewhere and to threaten the servants who were building the wall.

So remember, Satan wants to discourage, to confuse and to make you afraid. All three of these run counter to faith. When you are sensing any of these, then you can be sure that the Lord isn't motivating these thoughts and this isn't what He has in mind for you.

How can you overcome discouragement, confusion and fear?

What should you do? What did the people of Israel do?

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. 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."
Nehemiah 4:13-14

Nehemiah armed the workers. You are armed too. As a believer in Jesus Christ, the Bible says that you are part of His family, you are a servant of the Lord, and you are also a soldier of the Lord!

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.
I Corinthians 10:4-6

In addition, you have the whole armor of God described in Ephesians 6:10-17. Verse 11 in that passage says that God gave you the armor so that you can stand against the wiles of the devil. Put it on.

Look at the first advice Nehemiah gave to 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." Do not be afraid of them – remember the Lord! Write this passage on your heart so that you will remember it when the enemy wants to make you afraid. We looked at Romans 8:15 in another chapter but it bares repeating here.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Furthermore ...

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
I Timothy 1:7

God has not given you a spirit of fear. Satan wants to make you afraid but Jesus wants you to act in faith. Remember Jesus Christ and do not fear the enemy.

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“Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.” Fight for your family. Many people will benefit from the work that the Lord is doing in your life – your children, your wife, your parents, neighbors, others. Don’t give in to the enemy. Remember that the Lord is involved in this work and it will prosper. And remember that He will use your changed life to change the lives of others, particularly those closest to you.

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.
Nehemiah 4:15

The result in Jerusalem was fantastic. The enemies realized that their plan was known and God brought their counsel to nothing. Praise the Lord! The results in your life will be fantastic too. Submit yourself therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:7-8a).

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. 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. 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.
Nehemiah 4:16-18

The workers labored in one hand with the tools of their trade and in the other they held a weapon of war. They were protected and they were productive. They were wise enough to know that the enemy could attack at any time – while working, at home, during dinner, etc. So they carried their weapons with them.

Your enemy can attack at any time too. He may tempt you into an argument on the job; he may attempt to draw you into lust during lunch; he can certainly try to make you angry in rush hour traffic on the way home. If you have been leaving Jesus at home when you go out, STOP NOW. You cannot live two separate lives – one as a Christian and the other as someone else. Live every minute as a Spirit-filled believer in Christ Jesus. Carry the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, everywhere you go. Carry it spiritually by memorizing scripture and praise songs, and pray constantly to the Lord. Carry it physically. Nothing will refresh you in the middle of the day like fifteen minutes with God when all around you seem lost and hell bent.

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I remember working among a crew of lost, hell bent guys on a construction job years ago. They couldn't draw breath without swearing and threatening to fight each other. It was back-breaking work in the heat of summer. Praying one morning, I felt the Lord direct me to write the title to some praise songs on a piece of paper and stick it in my back pocket. Later that day when the sun was hottest and the language around me was the worst, I pulled out that sheet of paper and began to softly sing one of those songs. Everything changed. The heat was still unbearable; the discussion was as raunchy as ever but everything inside of me changed. I was strengthened physically and spiritually as I focused my praise on the Lord. The guys working with me even noticed the change in my attitude. It didn't keep many of them from swearing a blue streak all day long but they did notice a change.

Don't wait for trouble. Develop a plan to win the battle before it begins.

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. "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day." So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.

Nehemiah 4:19-23

Nehemiah saw the dangers and planned his defenses. An important part of his plan involved cooperation and accountability among the men whether they were at work or at home. They were accountable to each other along the wall and they maintained contact with each other in order to help defend another man's part of the wall.

God did not design the body of Christ to act independently either. He made us to act in harmony together, to bear each others burdens. We strengthen and support each other just as the muscles, nerves, bones, tendons and ligaments in your arm work together to lift weight or shoot a basketball. We are better together and when we separate ourselves we are easy prey for the lion that is looking for a lone sheep.

After this time, the Israelites were constantly on guard and they supported each other. Having someone you can call when you are tempted or someone you can pray with daily is a great benefit. The enemy picks off lone sheep like Sanballat's forces tried to pick off lone workers.

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Don't try to be a lone ranger. Agree to be accountable with another man who can provide Godly counsel and pray with you when you need help. Sometimes the cloud of oppression lifts when we ask a brother to pray with us about an area of weakness where the enemy is attacking. The simple act of bringing the temptation into the light will cause the devil to flee.

So the frontal attack against Nehemiah and the Israelites ended when the enemy's plans were known and Nehemiah took wise precautions. The enemy will wage a frontal attack against you too. He will turn up the heat by dangling something in front of your eyes to entice you, or to distance you from Christ. Your response should always be the same - submit to the Lord. Resist the devil and he will flee (this is a promise). Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Use the tools that God has given in His Word:

- II Corinthians 10:3-5 – take thoughts captive
- Romans 12:1-2 – be transformed as you renew your mind in His Word
- I Corinthians 10:13 – there is a way out of the temptation, look for it and take it
- I Corinthians 6:19-20 – your soul has been purchased with the pure blood of Jesus Christ; therefore, you should honor Him in your body
- John 10:10 – this temptation may look good but the enemy comes in only to kill, steal or destroy; there are long-term consequences to short-term gratification
- Romans 6:22-23 – you are free from sin so you don't have to do it anymore
- Luke 9:23-24 – the world says gratify self; God says if we will deny self then we will find true life, and
- Galatians 6:9 – keep the faith, don't grow weary in well-doing; there are fruitful days ahead!

In chapter 13 we will find out how to win the battle when the enemy tries other means to stop the work that God is doing in your life.

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Assignment 12

Name: _____

1. How did Sanballat respond to the work that the Lord was doing in Jerusalem?

2. How does this relate to the enemy's response to the work that God has been doing in your life while you have been involved in this course? _____

3. How did Nehemiah respond to Sanballat's attacks? _____

4. Have you ever allowed the ridicule of the enemy to discourage you? _____

If so, did the ridicule and discouragement continue to take place? _____

What does this tell you about the tactics of the enemy? _____

5. What does it mean to "have a mind to work"? _____

How does this relate to the last lesson on self-discipline? _____

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6. How can confusion lead you back into sin? _____

7. How did Nehemiah respond to the enemy's attempt to confuse the workers? _____

Tell me what you should do to set a watch against the enemy day and night? _____

8. On page six you see the people of Israel experience a little temporary failure in their work. What happened? _____

Explain how applying Hebrews 12:1-2 will enable you to avoid the trouble that they faced. _____

9. In the past you may have thought that you were the only one affected by your negative decisions. That wasn't true then and it isn't true now. How will those closest to you be affected by your positive decisions? _____

How does this motivate you to continue walking with the Lord? _____

10. How can you prepare for spiritual attacks that may come in the normal course of your day?

Once you complete this worksheet, mail it to:

Free In Christ Prison Ministries

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