



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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Study 15: BUILDING IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

Nehemiah 4:15-23

Our topic today is not only a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:25 but also a contemporary requirement for spiritual breakthroughs. The Bible makes it clear that the events recorded in the Bible happened to the people affected for example but they have been recorded and preserved for our learning / benefit (I Corinthians 10:11). To derive maximum benefit from these examples we must avoid three attitudes that plagued the Corinthian believers:

1. Carnality, unhealthy competition and rivalry – “I am for Paul, I am for Apollos” syndrome (I Corinthians 3:1-4).
2. Judging by appearances – “His bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible but his letters are weighty” (II Corinthians 10:10).
3. Despising simplicity of the gospel, self-exaltation, exactions (II Corinthians 11:3-7, 19, 20; 12:11-13).

We will do well to learn the salient lessons covered by our text today - ***Great accomplishments seldom occur without troublous times!*** The increasing opposition of the enemies had forced Nehemiah and the Jews to build in “troublous times”. However this was not without the foreknowledge of God. More than 90 years earlier, and in answer to prayer, God had revealed to Daniel that “the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times” (Daniel 9:25). God knows the end from the beginning and His word/promises shall all be fulfilled “though it tarry” for a while (Isaiah 46:9,10; Habakkuk 2:2,3). Troublous times do not hinder the programme of God. Rather, as gold is refined in the fire (Proverb 17:3) and faith tried in the furnace of affliction (Job 23:10), troublous times bring out the best in the believer (2 Corinthians 4:16,17; Romans 8:28). God's picture of the church and her mission in the world is that of a burning bush that is never consumed (Exodus 3:1,2). Many more have been made great through times of adversity than in periods of quiescence. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jesus and Paul are among such men. Their lives leave behind the salient message that the ability to build in troublous times is the secret of success and significant achievement in life. In this study we shall consider the causes and conditions of troublous times, and in future, the essential ingredients of making sustainable progress in troublous times.

1. **CAUSES OF TROUBLOUS TIMES:** Nehemiah 4:15,1-3,7,8,11; Acts 8:1; 2 Timothy 3:12; John 11:48

The enemies of the Jews were the main source of the troublous times for the Israelites. Similarly, the enemy of the believer, the devil, will through trials, temptations, situations and circumstances bring about troublous times to discourage faith and faithfulness. Enmity between the saint and sinners has always been a constant feature in life since creation, through the time of Abraham / Lot to the time of Christ / early church and beyond. As the devil has not changed and the demands of the Gospel remain the same, there will always be constant conflict between light and darkness. The person who wants to make himself a friend of the world will automatically become an enemy of God and vice versa (James 4:4). As Cain hated

Abel without cause (Genesis 4:6-7), and as Ishmael persecuted Isaac (Galatians 4:28,29), so will unbelievers persecute true believers today. Guilt generated by holy living (1 Peter 4:4); Non-conformity to worldly standards and demands (Romans 12:1,2); Separation from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18); Obedience to the scriptures (John 17:14), and aggressiveness in evangelism (2 Corinthians 11:24-28) are bound to attract severe opposition, the jeers of friends and sneers of foes. Also rational thinking of the unregenerate, will give rise to pressure and opposition to believers at home, school, work and play (John 11:48). Besides, social, family, academic, and career demands alongside with those of the gospel may sometimes exert considerable pressure on one's time and conveniences.

2. CONTINUATION DESPITE TROUBLOUS TIMES: Nehemiah 4:16-23; 2 Corinthians 11:27; Psalm 34:19; 2 Corinthians 12:9; John 4:6; Luke 8:23; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

For Nehemiah and the Jews, they knew that danger was imminent any time, besides the risks of abandoning their occupations temporarily for this great work. Their future progress depended so much on the success of the mission. The initiation of the building programme has generated and intensified opposition from the enemies. They had laid their hands on the plough (Luke 9:62); to plough on was difficult, to turn back will not only attract material loss, bring shame and defeat but also make them more vulnerable to their enemies. They had passed the point of no return and their predicament was similar to that of Israel before the Red Sea.

***If all were easy, if all were bright;
Where would the cross be, where would the fight;
But in the hard place, God provides to you;
Chances of proving what He can do.***

Physical and mental exhaustion, stress and strain, weariness, uncertainty, confusion, emotional turmoil (especially for the immature and young), doubts and fears may characterize troublous times, but Jesus still speaks peace to stormy waters. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him from them all. Conditions may look terrible, it may bring untold hardships and discouragement; but faithful is God who gave the promise and who also will do it. Come what may, "the streets shall be built again and the walls, even in troublous time" (**Daniel 9:25**). **IT IS A TASK THAT MUST BE DONE.** It should however be noted that it is the people that know their God who conquer in troublous times - "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32).