



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 21:12:2011

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Study 24: TRIUMPH BY FAITH AND VIGILANCE IN VICTORY

Nehemiah 6:15-19

The completion of the wall itself was a miracle of faith that brought astonishment to the enemies. With the wall completed the enemy changed their strategy to something more subtle but still aimed primarily at weakening the spiritual strength of the Jews. It is often the case that where diligence is not exercised, the very people who won the battle may end up losing the victory. The nobles of Judah became the first victims of the enemies' tactics and brought disgrace upon their privileged position (Ecclesiastes 10:1). Sometimes people in privileged positions who ought to set good examples have often led God's people into error, sin and shame through their self acclaimed wisdom (I Corinthians 1:26-31; Romans 1:22; 12:16; Proverbs 21:16). Great men are not always wise (Job 32:9). This is a timely reminder for vigilance that would lead to possession not punishment (II Kings 7:1-2,16-20). Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall (I Corinthians 10:12).

1. TRIUMPH BY FAITH: Nehemiah 6:15,16; Romans 8:28.

Faith always finds a way through stormy waters and rugged mountains. All things still work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to his purpose. All the opposition of the enemies aimed at weakening the Jews turned rather to strengthen their hands for the work. God uses the bruises of life to build character, and the worst plot of the enemy to further his cause (Genesis 50:20; Exodus 1:9,10,12). Nehemiah's steadfast faith in God made him to see silver linings on God's side of every cloud. The cheerful dedication of the Jews to the work, the gainful employment of all volunteers as well as divine intervention enabled them to complete the wall in 52 days. Great things can be accomplished in a little time where there is consecration, commitment and focus. The enemies were ashamed of their inability to stop the progress of the work. They envied the success of the Jews and acknowledged God's enabling power. We must never forget that faith never fails a man who keeps his faith!

2. VIGILANCE IN VICTORY: Nehemiah 6:17-19; Deuteronomy 7:2-8

What many people often fail to realise is that it is easy to win the battle and lose the victory. Such people often let down the guard, relax and sometimes are lost in celebrations when the enemy has designed a master plot to finish them. Sanballat and Tobiah had consistently and constantly opposed the building programme right from its inception and through every stage of it. As each plot to frustrate the work failed, they invented new ones, without delay. A few examples are:

1. Nehemiah 2:19,20 – Sanballat and Tobiah laughed, scorned and despised Nehemiah's mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
2. Nehemiah 4:1-3 – Great indignation and mockery by Sanballat and Tobiah; as well as alerting the army of Samaria.
3. Nehemiah 4:7-8,11 – Sanballat and Tobiah were very wroth and conspiracy to fight to hinder the building work.

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4. Nehemiah 6:1-13 – Sanballat and Tobiah hired false prophets and sent threatening open letters to hinder the work.

After failing in each of the above, they came up with a more subtle way of attack – pretending to foster good relationship with the Jews, through:

- Correspondence (vs 17) – The nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah and received many letters from him
- Alliance / Contract (vs 18a) – For there were many in Judah sworn unto him. Also Eliashib the priest was allied to Tobiah (Nehemiah 13:4).
- Intermarriage (vs 18b) – Tobiah was son in law of Shechaniah One of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest was son in law to Sanballat (Nehemiah 13:28). How despicable that the same Eliashib who built the ship gate (Nehemiah 3:1) descended so low! **“How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street”** (Lamentations 4:1)
- Flattering praise of Tobiah by nobles of Judah in an attempt to court Nehemiah’s favour and betrayal of Nehemiah (vs 19) – They reported Tobiah’s good deeds before Nehemiah, and informed Tobiah of Nehemiah’s words; thereby furnishing Tobiah with information to write threatening letters to Nehemiah. Unwittingly, Judah fell into the trap of Tobiah and fitted the description in Proverbs 28:4 - “those that forsake the law praise the wicked”. The Spiritual sensitivity of Judah had gone so low that they became like their enemies. We can understand their spiritual state by considering the following analogies:
 - a) Only monkeys can catch their fellow monkeys easily.
 - b) Birds of the same feathers flock together.
 - c) Two cannot walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3).
 - d) Evil communication corrupts good manners (I Corinthians 15:33).
 - e) By their fruits (friends) ye shall know them! (Matthew 7:16,20).

These activities culminated in the high priest preparing a great chamber previously used as store for meat offerings, frankincense, temple vessels, tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil; for Tobiah to reside in (Nehemiah 13:5).

It is a shame too that they forgot the labour, sacrifice, prayers and goodwill of Nehemiah for their well-being, but rather transferred their allegiance so easily to their enemies to that has been persistently seeking their hurt and downfall. By so doing they inadvertently were also biting the very fingers that fed them (Deuteronomy 32:10-15,18-20, Genesis 16:3,4, 2 Chronicles 15:1,2; 16:9,10,12).

Should Tobiah have won, it would have been to the shame of the Jews, but these nobles were so sentimental and spiritually blind that they were unable to evaluate the implications of their actions. Through Vigilance and Spiritual sensitivity Nehemiah not only identified the dangers and spiritual damage (e.g. defiling the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood, pollution of the temple and cessation of temple services - Nehemiah 13:29,4-10) but was courageous enough to take appropriate steps to address the situation effectively. He did not feel overwhelmed and gave up in frustration amidst the overwhelming odds. The fight started in faith must be continued and ended in faith if the victory is to be sustained (Nehemiah 13:7-9).