

Message Nine

Building and Fighting— the Need to Engage in Spiritual Warfare for the Building of the Church

Scripture Reading: Neh. 4; Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6, 21-22; 4:16, 23-24; 6:10-20

I. Nehemiah chapter 4 describes the frustration of the enemy regarding the rebuilding of the city:

- A. The enemies became angry and greatly enraged; they mocked the Jews and despised their building work—vv. 1-3:
 - 1. The enemies were angry because the building work was advancing, and they conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem—vv. 7-8.
 - 2. Nehemiah trusted in God by praying that God would return their reproach to themselves; thus, the Jews built the wall, for they had a heart to work—vv. 4-6.
- B. The Jews prayed to their God, and under Nehemiah's instruction and direction they set a watch against the enemy day and night:
 - 1. They were ready to fight with weapons under the encouragement of Nehemiah, who instructed them to remember the great and awesome Lord and to fight for their families—v. 14.
 - 2. Half of Nehemiah's servants labored in the work, and half of them held weapons, ready to fight—v. 16.
 - 3. On the one hand, the children of Israel were prepared to fight; on the other hand, they trusted in God, believing that He would fight for them—vv. 9-23.
 - 4. As the commander in chief, Nehemiah was among those who were ready to fight against the enemy; he took part in the night watch and did not leave these matters to others but participated in them himself—vv. 17-23.

II. Building the church as the city of God is not an easy task; building can be carried out only by fighting—Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16; 6:10-20:

- A. When the children of Israel returned from their captivity, Ezra, Nehemiah, and others rose up to rebuild the temple and the holy city through intense warfare.
- B. The Israelites who worked in the building with Nehemiah labored with one hand to build and with the other hand held their weapons for fighting the battle (Neh. 4:17); this reveals that whenever we labor on God's building, we will certainly be involved in a battle.
- C. Regarding the building up of God's dwelling place, there is a real conflict, a severe fighting between God and His enemy—vv. 1-3, 7-8:
 - 1. The enemy hates seeing the building of God's dwelling place going up in a good way.
 - 2. Satan will do everything that he can to interrupt, interfere, attack, and destroy—Matt. 16:18-19.
- D. We must build the church as the temple and fight the battle so that God may have the kingdom—6:10.
- E. When the saints migrate for the spreading of the church life, they are an army fighting the battle—cf. Acts 8:4-12.
- F. Those who build the church must build and fight at the same time—Neh. 4:14, 16-21.

- G. Without warfare and without a spirit of fighting, there is no building; building calls for grueling warfare.

III. For the building up of the church as the Body of Christ, there is the need for spiritual warfare—Eph. 6:10-20:

- A. Regrettably, in the church today almost none of the believers know of this spiritual warfare; this is due to weakness in life, lack of spiritual strength, and insufficient clarity in the light of the truth.
- B. Spiritual warfare is based on the victory of Christ—Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15; 1 John 3:8:
 - 1. The starting point of spiritual warfare is standing upon the victory of Christ; it is seeing that Christ has already defeated the enemy—S. S. 4:8; Rev. 3:21; 5:5-6:
 - a. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil—1 John 3:8.
 - b. In His incarnation and human living Christ defeated Satan during the temptation in the wilderness—Matt. 4:1-11.
 - c. Through death the Lord Jesus destroyed the devil, who has the might of death; He abolished Satan, brought him to naught—Heb. 2:14.
 - 2. The work of the church on earth is to maintain Christ's victory; the Lord has already won the battle, and the church is here to maintain His victory—Eph. 6:11, 13.
- C. The warfare between the church and Satan is a battle between us who love the Lord and who are in His church and the evil powers in the heavenlies—v. 12:
 - 1. The principalities, the authorities, and the world-rulers of darkness are rebellious angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God and who now rule in the heavenlies over the nations of the world—Col. 1:13; Dan. 10:20.
 - 2. We need to realize that our warfare is not against human beings but against the evil spirits, the evil powers, in the heavenlies.
- D. Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body of Christ; we must fight the battle in the Body—Eph. 1:22-23:
 - 1. Spiritual warfare is not an individual matter; it is a matter of the Body—4:12, 16; 5:30.
 - 2. The church is a corporate warrior, and the believers together make up this corporate warrior—6:10-20.
 - 3. If we read Ephesians from chapter 1 to chapter 6, we will see that warfare is a matter of the Body of Christ, and the Body is a new creation in Christ, in the Spirit, and in the heavenlies—2:6:
 - a. If we do not have the Body life, we are not adequate to engage in spiritual warfare.
 - b. In order to fight the battle, we must be in the reality of the Body—4:12, 16.
 - 4. After we have been formed corporately into an army, we will be able to fight against God's enemy—6:11-12.
- E. To deal with God's enemy, we need to be empowered with the greatness of the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavenlies, far above all the evil spirits in the air—v. 10; 1:19-22:
 - 1. The fact that we need to be empowered in the Lord indicates that in ourselves we cannot fight the spiritual warfare against Satan and his evil

- kingdom; we can fight only in the Lord and in the might of His strength—6:10.
2. The charge to be empowered implies the need to exercise our will; if we would be empowered for spiritual warfare, our will must be strong and exercised—S. S. 4:4.
- F. We need to know and apply the principles of spiritual warfare:
1. The first principle of spiritual warfare is that we cannot use fleshly weapons, human schemes, and natural methods; since spiritual warfare is not against flesh but against spiritual forces (Eph. 6:12), the weapons should not be fleshly (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
 2. The second principle of spiritual warfare is to keep the position of ascension—Eph. 2:6:
 - a. In fighting a battle, the position above the enemy is strategic.
 - b. Satan and his spiritual forces are in the air, but we are seated in the third heaven above them—v. 6.
 - c. Satan and his forces are under us, and it is their fate to be defeated by us.
 3. The third principle of spiritual warfare is that we must use spiritual weapons—2 Cor. 10:3-5:
 - a. The spiritual weapons are powerful to overthrow the strongholds of the enemy—vv. 4-5.
 - b. When we are fighting, all our activities must be of the spirit, touching the feeling from within our spirit; this is an extremely basic principle.
 4. The fourth principle of spiritual warfare is to have fighting prayers—the prayers of spiritual warfare—Matt. 6:9-10, 13:
 - a. Whenever and wherever there is the building up of the church, there is the activity of the gates of Hades against it; therefore, there is the need for fighting prayers—16:18-19.
 - b. If we see that the prayers of the greatest worth are prayers in ascension, then we can understand that prayer is a warfare, and we will utter prayers of warfare; such is the nature of the prayer spoken of in Ephesians 6:
 - (1) All prayers that are expressed in the heavenly realm and from the throne of God are prayers of warfare—Rev. 5:8; 8:3-5.
 - (2) If we are in the heavenly realm, we are able to pray prayers of ascension, prayers of warfare—Eph. 2:6; 6:18.
 - c. When we are strengthened, we are renewed; when we are renewed, we are filled; when we are filled, we are equipped to fight; it is in the fighting spirit that we pray fighting prayers of spiritual warfare—3:14-16; 4:23-24; 5:18b; 6:18.
 - d. We need to stand against the stratagems of the devil by fighting the battle in the Body with fighting prayers, praying at every time in spirit to put on the whole armor of God to build up the Body of Christ as the house of God for the glory of God and as the kingdom of God for the dominion of God for the complete fulfillment of the economy of God—vv. 10-20.