

SCRIPTURE

Neh. 2:18b; 4:21 And they said, Let us rise up and build; and they strengthened their hands for the good work. ...So we labored in the work; and half of them held spears from the start of dawn until the stars came out.

FOCUS

Nehemiah and his brothers carried out the rebuilding work with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.

MINISTRY

We need fighting prayers. Please remember that once we touch the building, the enemy will come to attack and frustrate. Therefore, there is the need of fighting. We need to have fighting prayer for the building. I do not need to speak too much concerning this matter, because the words in Nehemiah 4 are very clear. The enemy despised and mocked the children of Israel when they returned from their captivity to rebuild the holy city. Furthermore, the enemy tried a thousand schemes to frustrate and falsely incriminate them so that their hands might be weakened. When Nehemiah saw the situation, he immediately went to pray before God. As soon as he prayed, he became clear inwardly. He knew that this was the strategy of the enemy, so he guarded against it right away. He and his brothers carried out the rebuilding work with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon (v. 17). This is to build on the one hand and to fight on the other. In Ephesians, a book on the building of the church, the matter of spiritual warfare is also emphatically mentioned. Ephesians 4 speaks about building, and chapter 6 speaks about warfare. We cannot merely have the building; we must also have the warfare to guard against the attack of the enemy. From the book of Nehemiah we can see that there are three aspects of the attack of the enemy. The first aspect is the enemy's mocking. This is his stratagem from the outside. The enemy said, "What are these feeble Jews doing?" (4:2). "Even their stone wall that they are building, if a fox were to go up on it, he would breach it" (v. 3). This kind of mocking may cause us to despise the work that we ought to do. The second aspect of the enemy's attack is to set up plots. The enemy sent word to Nehemiah, saying, "Come; let us meet together" (6:2). If Nehemiah had gone, however, the work would have been delayed, and he would have fallen into their trap. The third aspect of the enemy's attack is to cause there to be weakness among the children of Israel and to cause some to speak discouraging words. We also have encountered these situations. Nearly thirty years ago when we were first raised up by the Lord in northern China, we were very weak, but we also had the Lord's presence with us. At that time there were people from the outside saying, "They are just children playing; after a few days they will be finished. Do not pay any attention to them." These words were the same as those in the book of Nehemiah: "Even their stone wall that they are building, if a fox were to go up on it, he would breach it." When I heard those words, I also went before the Lord to pray, asking Him to vindicate us. We deeply realized that it was the Lord who had raised us up. What we were doing was not a small thing; it was not children playing but a testimony raised up by the Lord Himself. I still remember very clearly that at that time I read Nehemiah 4 to the Lord. Also, sometimes the enemy's stratagem was to have people ask us to go to

meetings and discussions. This was also just like what Nehemiah encountered in his time. We altogether refused these invitations. We ignored the mocking words and rejected the enticing schemes. We also encountered internal difficulties. When the brothers and sisters were serving together, frequently problems arose from within our midst. Sometimes for no reason at all, a brother would feel that the expression on another brother's face was not good. In addition, the other brother would feel that there was a problem with that brother's tone of voice. Then these two would begin to be suspicious of each other. The more the suspicions increased, the more the problem grew. We all know this kind of situation, so I do not have to speak too much about this. Satan worked among us by stirring up bad feelings and creating difficulties. Thus, he caused us to be in discord and to be suspicious of each other. Moreover, sometimes we had problems within, causing us to be discouraged, to be weakened, and to become sick spiritually. As a result, we could not go forward in the matter of building. We all have to guard against all these attacks of Satan. Hence, we must have fighting prayer. Whenever we encounter a problem, we have to come back to pray before the Lord. When people say that what we are doing is of no significance, we have to bring this word before the Lord and tell Him about it. If the brothers and sisters are suspicious of each other and if they are jealous of each other, we also have to bring this before the Lord. Even when we are weak in ourselves, we have to bring it to the Lord as well. We always have to deal with these matters by means of prayer. We must reject these things and deal with them by our fighting prayer. If the brothers and sisters in a locality all exercise their functions, if the co-workers and responsible brothers and sisters do not replace the saints but rather perfect them to serve together with them, if all those with a ministry are for the building of the church, and if all the saints are holding weapons, fighting a spiritual warfare by their fighting prayers while doing the building work together, then you will see a glorious church being built up in that locality. You will also see that a miniature of the New Jerusalem will be manifested to be a resting place for God and a home for all His children. God's presence, God's throne, and God's life will all be there. God's power and God's light will also be there. The gospel will spread out from there, the saved ones will be built up there, and God will be glorified there. Whenever people come among them, they will sense that God is there. They will say, "This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven, this is Bethel, and this is oil poured upon stone." This is a glorious thing; this is what the Lord desires to gain in every place in this age. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we would not take these matters merely as doctrines for our studying. May the Lord impress this vision deeply into us. By His mercy we want to be built up and to build up others in each locality so that the glorious house of the Lord may be manifested in all the localities on earth for God and man to have a habitation.¹

PRAYER BURDENS

1. Pray that (like Nehemiah), we would be aggressive to fight and build the church. That even in our weakness we would find strength through Christ's resurrection power to pray for the saints, for the families, for the YP, and for the other churches.
2. Pray for all the families to be strengthened, sanctified and in harmony, especially between husband and wife. Protect and sanctify the families from the world and the enemy's lies and distractions.
3. Pray for shepherding of our newly baptized YP and their healthy growth in life over the next year.
4. Pray for more regular blending and visitation between Louisville and Lexington. *Blending is the way!*
5. Pray for the saints' trip to Korea, that all the students would receive a life-changing vision of the universal Body of Christ.

Following the Pattern of Nehemiah and His Brothers to Fight and Build for God's Interest

Neh. 2:3 And I said to the king, May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in waste and its gates are consumed with fire?

Note 2:3 "May": ...Nehemiah was one who lived not in his natural man but in resurrection. He was aggressive, but his aggressiveness was accompanied by other characteristics. In His relationship with God, He was one who loved God and also loved God's interests on the earth, including the Holy Land (signifying Christ), the holy temple (signifying the church), and the holy city (signifying the kingdom of God). As a person who loved God, Nehemiah prayed to God to contact Him in fellowship. Furthermore, Nehemiah trusted in God and even became one with God. As a result, he became the representative of God. In his relationship with the people, Nehemiah was altogether unselfish; with him, there was no self-seeking or self-interest. He was always willing to sacrifice what he had for the people and for the nation.

Neh. 4:18, 20 And as for the builders, each had his sword strapped to his side, and so they built; and he who sounded the trumpet was beside me. ...In whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, gather yourselves to us there. Our God will fight for us.

Note 4:18 "me": As the commander-in-chief, Nehemiah was among those who were ready to fight against the enemy, and he took part in the night watch (vv. 17-23). He did not leave these matters to others but participated in them himself.

¹ CWWL, 1958, vol. 2, "The Building Work of God," ch. 10: A Few Principles for Practicing the Building of the Church.