

The Warfare over Jerusalem

Nehemiah 4:1-23: "And it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that we built the wall, he was angry and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? shall they be permitted to go on? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, when they are burned? And Tobijah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox went up, it would break down their stone wall. Hear, our God, for we are despised, and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in a land of captivity! And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; for they have provoked the builders. But we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together to the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work.

And it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobijah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being repaired, that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Then we prayed to our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens faileth, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build at the wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them and kill them, and put an end to the work. And it came to pass that when the Jews that dwelt by them came and told us so ten times, from all the places whence they returned to us, I set in the lower places behind the wall in exposed places, I even set the people, according to their families, with their swords, their spears and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not afraid of them: remember the Lord who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses.

And it came to pass that when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had defeated their counsel, we returned all of us to the wall, every one to his work. And from that time forth the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held the spears, and the shields, and the bows, and the corslets; and the captains were behind all the house of Judah. They that built on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that loaded, wrought in the work with one hand, and with the other they held a weapon. And the builders had every one his sword girded by his side, and built. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and extended, and we are scattered upon the wall, one far from another: in what place you hear the sound of the trumpet, thither shall you assemble to us; our God will fight for us.

And we laboured in the work; and half of them held the spears from the rising of the dawn till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time I said to the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and be for labour in the day. And neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard that followed me, none of us put off our garments: every one had his weapon on his right side.

Lord, we commit this chapter to You. We ask that the Holy Spirit would make it alive. We realize as we come this morning we cannot do that, but we know that You are able to do it because You have the words of eternal life. How we ask for an anointing that is not ours; it is Yours. How we ask for You to explain what You penned through the Holy Spirit to Nehemiah, and how we ask that You help us understand those great things that are in Your heart. If You do that we will be pleased, and if not we will be sorrowful. So Lord, we ask You to speak; Your servants heareth. And we wait on You for Your Word to be released. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I think you all know that I have been sharing on, "Onward Towards Jerusalem." I thought I was done; you thought I was done. I think I told you that I was done, but when I went to New Jersey, I realized that I was not done. I began to think about this whole matter of Jerusalem. It dawned on me, I do not know why I am so slow to hear sometimes, but it dawned on me that there is an enormous warfare over Jerusalem. And we cannot just stop with those first three parts. You remember we shared on, "Looking for Jerusalem," and we need to see what is in God's heart. When He found His man, Abraham, it says in Hebrews chapter 11:10: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He found that man, and his whole life was changed.

Brothers and sisters, the simple explanation of that first message is that God is looking for men and women who see the city. Now I am not talking about earthly Jerusalem; that is not my burden. I am talking about something far greater than that. God's whole purpose is summarized in this thought of Jerusalem; God in a people where all the glory of the Lord Jesus is fully manifest and made abundantly clear. I believe that is what God wants us to see. And we cannot just see it because if we just see it, we will become visionaries. We will be talking about vision day and night. Now I am a fan of that word. You may not be, but I think without vision the people perish. We need vision, but we need more than vision.

So I spoke also on this matter of "Longing for Jerusalem." There is something deep in the heart of God that He wants to put into the heart of His people, and if He can do that their whole life will be changed. He has a longing. When you read Psalm 132, a Psalm of Degrees, you realize His longing, "How He loved Jerusalem," and the word is "how He desired." It means longing for a habitation, and He repeated himself, "I have desired it." The latter part of Psalm 132 is God's longing, but two thirds of it, verses 1-12 is David's longing. He found the man He could put His longing into, and I believe with all of my heart that is what it means to be a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14).

And I shared, "Living in Jerusalem." If you just long for it, you become a mystic. We have some wonderful mystics in church history. One of my favorite hymns is by a mystic, and it is in our kitchen, Bernard of Clairvaux, a wonderful brother in Christ. I love his hymns, I love his writings. But if all we have is a longing, it is not enough. So we must live in Jerusalem.

We talked about ones that were willing and chose to live in Jerusalem. They were blessed of the people. The rulers were compelled to live in Jerusalem; they had to. The ones who drew the lot, one in ten were required to live in Jerusalem. But some saw this great thing in God's heart, and they chose to live in Jerusalem willingly. That is the essence of the three messages.

Today, if it is not already obvious, (I think it ought to be,) we are dealing with the warfare over Jerusalem. If that is so in God's heart, and it summarizes all of His eternal purpose and all that He intends to do from the beginning of creation to the beginning of eternity, you need to understand that there will be an intense and unrelenting and diabolical warfare over His achieving that; there is no question. It does not become a mystery any longer, why the warfare over Jerusalem. Well, the warfare over Jerusalem is because it is what God is after. When we come to the glorious end of the New Testament, we can take heart because at the end of the New Testament in Revelation 21-22 we see the glory of Jerusalem revealed. Do not think for one moment it will not happen. Do not ever think that. Our God is the guarantee that what is in His heart will happen. Now there is less assurance that we will cooperate with Him in that happening, but I believe that is what He is looking for. So this is the burden that is in my heart.

When you consider this battle over Jerusalem, this battle over God's heart, this battle over God's purpose, this battle over God's desire, there are four things you need to know. First of all, we need to know what the battle is about. There is nothing worse than going to war and not knowing what the battle is about. I think we tried that in the Middle East one time. We thought it was about weapons of mass destruction, and all of a sudden, to the embarrassment of the United States, (and I am a citizen, you get that) no weapons were found. We need to know what the battle is about.

Secondly, we need to know the power of prayer that is demonstrated in this book of Nehemiah, and in a living way we as the church of God need to know the power of prayer. Some people neglect prayer, maybe not personal prayer, but they do not understand the importance of corporate prayer, and we need to see it and know it. It is so important.

Thirdly, we need to know the importance of weapons. It is clear in this chapter 4 that they repeat how they carried their weapons with them all the time. We need to know something about weapons. What are our weapons? How do we use our weapons? This is what I believe Nehemiah chapter 4 is about.

Fourthly, there is a wonderful verse in Nehemiah chapter 4 that says, "We need to know who fights for us." If we do not, we will never stand in the day of battle. We will be overcome. We will not be overcomers; we will be slaughtered, in a sense. If we do not know who fights for us, we will not know the great secret of Nehemiah and the great secret of the Bible.

What the Battle is about

I have already said, "Do not go to war if you do not know what the battle is about. Do not even bother. What a terrible thing it would be to go to war not knowing what the battle is about. You remember that the Bible is a book about battles, warfare. You remember that the apostle Paul wrote to his son Timothy in I Timothy 6:12 and said, "Fight the good fight of faith." The Bible is a book about battles and warfare.

It says in that wonderful Psalm 144:1: "Blessed be Jehovah my rock, who teaches my hands to war, my fingers to fight." Spiritual battle is all the way through the Word of God. You have to close your eyes in disbelief not to see it. It is throughout the Word of God. War is not a strange concept to human beings; they are experts at war. From the beginning they have been conquering

and have been conquered. It seems to me that all the humans want to do is fight. If you look throughout history it is full of wars from the beginning to the end.

The New York Times is not a favorite read of mine, by the way, but I do believe they got this right. They said, "Over the past 3,400 years of human history there have been only 268 years of peace." Now I am an engineer, and I can calculate, but that is only eight percent of human history out of the 3,400 years, if they are right, only eight percent in peace. Wars everywhere.

Another source has said, "There has been 10,264 wars in human history." Isn't that a strange thing when we think about war from the human side? You remember that the Lord said in His "Mount of Olivet" discourse in speaking of the last days in Matthew 24:6: "But Ye will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not disturbed; for all these things must take place, but it is not yet the end." War is human nature.

When you look in the Bible, you see that same thing repeated. Some have said that there are at least fifty-four wars in the Bible. The first war is in Genesis 14. You remember Abraham, the man of God whom God found. When he started his real recovery work, that man of God who saw that city, was in a war with four kings.

You cannot pronounce any of their names. I have loaded a Bible app on my phone that helps me with those pronunciations. I am so afraid that when I see these people in the eternal sphere, I am going to have their names so wrong that they are going to laugh at me, so it is helpful. But you can hardly pronounce the names of any of the four kings. However, that was the first battle in the Bible in which there was a secret. You remember in that war in chapter 14 when Lot was taken captive and Sodom was defeated, Abraham came and defeated the four kings. And Melchisedec, king of righteousness, king of Salem is the first mention of Jerusalem in the Scriptures, for Jerusalem is Salem. Jerusalem is also peace which came to this priest of the most High God. I believe there is a reason. With this first war, he was trying to show that all the wars in effect were really over God getting what He is after. It is not just man's nature; it is the evil that is in man's heart, but it is all about this battle for what He is after.

So this king of Salem, Jerusalem, came and gave him bread and wine. I believe that is a very important thing. You will never understand who Melchisedec is. There is only one other mention in the Old Testament Psalm 110:4, and you still do not have a good idea of who this Melchisedec is, but when you go to the book of Hebrews chapter 7, you discover who this Melchisedec is. It was the preincarnate appearing of the Lord Jesus because Hebrews 7:3 says, "He is assimilated as the Son of God." That is the great revelation! You remember that over and over that the anonymous and anointed writer of Hebrews said, "Jesus is the Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." That is who our Lord Jesus is. That is the first war, and it is the first mention of Jerusalem.

But the wars extend all the way to the New Testament. Of course, you know that. As a matter of fact, when you come to the end of the New Testament, there is a series of wars. It seems that war never stops on this planet. There is the war of Armageddon in chapter 16, which is the last war with the nations. Just to set the tone of how prominent this matter of war is, it extends into a war with Babylon in chapter 18 of Revelation. By the way, five times it is called Babylon, the

great city. Now think about that. The great city is not Babylon; it is the counterfeit city. The great city is the city of the living God which is Jerusalem. But here we find this counterfeit in the world filled with merchandise, deceiving many men and women who are living for themselves and not living for the eternals. That is what Babylon is; it deceives the whole world. But in a moment she is consumed in that war.

Then there is a last war in the Bible. You will recall that Satan was cast into the abyss, and the false prophet and the beast were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. But for some reason God, in His wisdom, cast Satan into the abyss, and he was there through the whole millennial kingdom of a thousand years. Then God brings him out of the abyss, and he starts a war by deceiving the nations. Ultimately the Lord Jesus defeats His chief enemy and destroys him. He puts him into the lake of fire with the beast and the false prophet, and that becomes the beginning of eternity. There are wars from beginning to end.

Jerusalem is no stranger to the war. Do you know that there have been six wars in Jerusalem (the earthly Jerusalem) since the founding? When she was founded in 1948 to 1949, there was Israel's war of Independence. In 1956 there was the Suez crisis. I was five years old at the time so I do not remember it. There was the 1967 six-day war in Gaza, and I do remember that. I remember that there was something about this, and I was not even a Christian. There was the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and I definitely remember that because I was a Christian less than a year. I thought the Lord must be coming, maybe tonight. All of us who were saved in the Charismatic movement believed He was at the door. Then in 1982 there was the Lebanon War, and in 2006 came the second Lebanon War. These were all wars over Jerusalem, and they are symbolic. The real war is over God getting what He wants in a people and for His Son, and that is the battle over Jerusalem.

In Nehemiah chapter 4 we are brought into unmistakable clarity. Chapter 4 is so graphic, so real because they were there to build the walls of Jerusalem. That was their only reason for going back. We have already heard some good presentations about Ezra and Nehemiah. In Ezra they rebuilt the temple, and they formed that new relationship. They recovered and restored their relationship with God. In Nehemiah there was a specific thing that they were doing, which was the rebuilding of the walls in Jerusalem that were in ruin. And this talks about that broader, corporate fellowship of what God is looking for in a people. I have told you before what Brother Sparks' book, "The Recovering of the Lord's Testimony in Fullness" meant to me as a young believer back in 1973. Then Brother Kaung gave those messages on Nehemiah in 1973 which are now in a book, and it changed my whole perspective. I began to see that there is something to this Jerusalem that is a tremendous consequence. It is what fills the heart of God for His Son, and that is what the entire spiritual conflict is about.

When we read Nehemiah, we sometimes say it is the last historical book of the Old Testament. That is wrong actually, but I did not realize that until this preparation. It is actually the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi, the prophetic book, cuts off five years before Nehemiah ends. So we would excavate Nehemiah from before the psalms and transpose it to where it should be in chronological order. So Nehemiah would be the very last utterance in the Old Testament. It

is the last book, it is the final word, and it is the final work. And the reason it is the final word and the final work of God is because it has to do with His desire for Jerusalem.

There is a word that is repeated here that makes it clear what this battle is about. It is the word “work.” Now I know most of you do not like the word “work.” I always say to people with a little bit of jest, forgive me. Work is a four letter word. Nobody likes it, even less since the pandemic came along. Everybody could stay at home in their pajamas, in their skivvies, and they could sit around munching donuts. Forgive me, but I was an employer, and I was screaming to the top of my lungs, waiting for people, “When are you coming back to the office? We have to get to work.” They thought that I was a raging old man that had lost his mind. The first one that was back was wandering around trying to talk to somebody. But there was work we needed to do, and they were all at home in front of the monitors. Now I thank God for that because if this had happened when I first became an engineer, the economy would really have been shut down. Thank God, we were able through zoom and many other means to keep the economy going to some degree.

Work is mentioned twenty-one times in the book of Nehemiah. You have to see it. He explains it; it is in the battles that we find the work that is being done. It is all against that work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. It was the whole reason for the battle when you look at it.

Nehemiah 6:3: “I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?”

This is God’s great work. We speculated when we had a conference a few years ago about, could we do that great work? Could we say, “I am doing a great work?” Could we say that? And we were holding back from that a little. I do not think Nehemiah was deceived at all in thinking that he was doing a great work. Nehemiah knew Who was doing the great work, and because Nehemiah joined Him in that great work, he could say to those enemies who were seeking to physically kill him, “I am doing a great work, and why should I come down to you?” They wanted them to come to the plain of Ono which seemed so innocent, “Just come down here, and let’s have a fireside chat; we are reasonable people.” But if you think they were reasonable, I am going to show you they were not reasonable people; they were diabolical enemies: “Just come down and let’s talk it over. We can settle it. We can work it out. We can even help you build the wall.” And Nehemiah said, “You have no rights, no inheritance, you have no part in it.” What a hardheaded man! He could have had some sort of collaboration, but when you see the essence of it, you realize he could not have that collaboration.

Nehemiah 2:18: “And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me; as also the king’s words which he had said unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. And they strengthened their hands for the good work.”

Brothers and sisters, this was the object. This was the object of intense warfare. Now let us think about his enemies. Before you have those misty eyes and think very lovingly about Sanballat and Tobijah and Geshem, let me tell you a few things about these men. The very name Sanballat means “sin has given life.” I never heard that until I prepared this message. How can you work with a person like that? Sanballat was a Moabite. The Moabites did a lot that compromised

individuals. You remember the two sons that were from the two daughters of Lot. Moabites were the mortal enemies of the children of Israel. In Isaiah 15:5 It says that Sanballat was from the city Horonaim. So when you read Nehemiah, you begin to understand that Sanballat, the Horonite was a Moabite. He was from the city of Horonaim, but he was a Moabite, a mortal enemy of the Lord.

Tobijah was not any better. You think maybe old Tobijah was a nice sort of fellow. But it says, "He was an Ammonite." And I remember Brother Kaung used to read this verse and I thought it was terribly strong. The verse is from Deuteronomy 23:3 about the Ammonites and the Moabites, and it says, "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not come into the congregation of Jehovah; even their tenth generation, (that is like seventy times seven in the New Testament.) shall not come into the congregation of Jehovah for ever." So do not get too misty-eyed thinking these are people we could work with to do the work of God. They were mortal enemies; The Horonaim city means "angers raging." They were raging against this great work of God. They wanted to destroy it, and put an end to it. They wanted to stop the work, or as Nehemiah says, "to hinder the work." That was what they intended to do. That was their hatred, their disdain. How they raged!

Nehemiah 4:11: "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them and kill them, and put an end to the work."

That is what the battle is over. Knowing what the battle is over is so vitally important. It is the only way we can war the good warfare. I think this chapter 4 is so abundantly clear that you can begin to understand what was in the enemy's heart, and what is still in the enemy's heart. I hear Christians say, "Oh, I am in such a battle today." Well, it is true; it is a battle being a Christian, but what you do not understand is that the battle is not just about you. The battle is about something far greater than you, and if you are attached to this thing that is in God's heart, you will be in the center of the raging battle that Nehemiah found himself in. Had he chosen to stay in the palace of Shushan with Artaxerxes, he would have had a pretty good life unless somebody slipped him a poisoned cup of wine. He had it made! He had a cushy life! He had a blessed life! Why would such a one go back to Jerusalem? His first sight of Jerusalem was of the walls that had been burned, and the gates were torn down. Everything was in ruins. What would possess a human to go and do this? Who would think it is only something? It is only if God can put a longing in your heart for something other than this world. It is only when you willfully choose to live in Jerusalem. That is when you will know what the battle is about.

Brother Sparks said something, quoting from the book that so changed my life, "The Recovering of the Lord's Testimony in Fullness." He called it a peculiar warfare. He said, "Let me say again at once this is a peculiar warfare. There is a warfare relating to the salvation of the unsaved, which involves all who seek to bring to the Lord all those who know Him not. We know very well that it is a real battle and there is real warfare associated with that. There is that warfare which relates to being a Christian and just going on as a Christian. It is not an easy thing to continue in the way of the Lord. Most of the militant hymns that we sing have to do with the Christian life in general, and they certainly have a rightful place because the Christian life on one side is truly a warfare. But when we have said that, we have not said all. There is a peculiar warfare connected with the Lord's ultimate purpose. The warfare becomes of a different character, is in a

different world, and takes a different forms, when it is related to this, and it is with this that we are occupied in our present meditation: It is that wall that is the trouble, or the cause of the trouble; that is to say, the recovery of what the Lord wants concerning His people; and it provokes a great deal of very positive and persistent and antagonism of a particular character.”

Do you understand? That is a profound quote; that is a prophetic voice speaking. This is what it is about. Do you know what it is about? And if you do know what it is about and you give yourself to this, then you will be able to stand in that day of battle.

Why is it a peculiar warfare? It is because of what it is over. The word “peculiar” occurs several times in the Bible. It is a peculiar word, but it is an important word. If you do not understand the importance of peculiar in the New Testament, you will never understand what Jerusalem is about. As a matter of fact, in Exodus 19:3-6 which is the first time it is used, it is when God called them and sent Moses up the mountain. By the way, this is before the law was given. The law was not God’s emphasis at that moment.

Exodus 19:3-5: “And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and to the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples: for all the earth is mine:”

This peculiar warfare is because God is looking for a people that expresses all that He is. And He calls that people, believe it or not, a peculiar treasure. Now I could understand if the Father calls the Lord Jesus His peculiar treasure. He is, but He calls us, His people, His peculiar treasure. How clear that battle becomes. Jerusalem is a peculiar treasure to Him and the object of peculiar warfare.

In Psalm 135:4 that word is used again. “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.” Isn’t that marvelous! Do you understand that God made everything? Do you understand that God owns everything? If you do not, I am sorry to burst your bubble. But do you understand that God chose His people to be His peculiar treasure? That is wonderful! That is unspeakably wonderful! If you ever think you are devalued, if you ever think you are not loved, if you have ever had this low self-esteem, think what you are in the eyes of God. You are part of that peculiar treasure, His gift to Himself.

Malachi 3:16-17: “Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another; and Jehovah observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Isn’t that marvelous!

I cannot think of anything more wonderful to be called with you than God’s peculiar treasure. This is Jerusalem. This is what it is meant to be. This is what Peter said in I Peter 2:9 when he quoted Exodus. He quoted those verses basically in his own way, and he said, “You are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, all of these things,” and then he said, you are “a peculiar

people.” (KJV) The other time it is used in the New Testament is in Titus 2:14. That is what we are. May the Lord help us.

The Power of Prayer

Another thing we need to know, and that is the power of prayer. We need to know as a peculiar people, a peculiar treasure the power of prayer. If you can say anything about Nehemiah, you know he was truly a man of war. It is very clear in that book. If nothing else was said about Nehemiah, he was clearly a man of prayer. There are those who say there are fourteen prayers in that short book of Nehemiah. There are certainly ten that are recorded that we can see, and the most interesting thing to me that I noticed is every time Nehemiah was tested, every time he got into trouble, every time there was raging conflict, his first reaction was to pray. Now I know Nehemiah, and I believe my first reaction would be to run, but his first reaction was always prayer. How that speaks volumes! It is so clear that it speaks volumes.

The other thing about Nehemiah’s prayers is that seven of the ten prayers in the book of Nehemiah are only one verse long. As we grow in the Lord, as we get a bigger vocabulary of the Lord’s things, we sort of take on these on-going endless prayers of what the Lord is after. He even said on the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not be like the Gentiles and think you can be heard by your much speaking.” That is a single verse.

We cannot despise anybody’s prayer. When it comes to praying, brothers and sisters, how wonderful it would be if all of us just prayed that “burst” prayer. The commentaries refer to it as arrow prayers. Remember, we are talking about warfare. These were arrow prayers. They were so direct; they hit the mark, and they changed the whole environment. But some of them were not even a sentence long. Amazing! Now before you think that maybe he had a speech impediment or something, and he could not pray a long prayer, he prayed the longest prayer in the Bible. If you read Nehemiah 9 it is 1,213 words. It is the longest prayer in the Bible. So do not despise those who pray longer (just a little bit of self-defense). Do you understand the importance of prayer? This man knew the importance of it, and he knew in battle that without real prayer, corporate prayer, individual prayer, a life of prayer, concerted prayer, prayer that binds and looses, there would not be any victory in this conflict. He absolutely knew it.

When you look at his first prayer in Nehemiah 2:4 it says of King Artaxerxes, “And the king said to me, For what dost thou make request?” We do not even know what he prayed. It just says, “I prayed to the Lord, so I prayed to the God of the heavens.” Why didn’t he record it? I wish he had recorded it. Those of us who study the Word think, “Why didn’t he record it?” But we know it was a powerful prayer because he testified after that prayer of the good hand of God upon him. I think this is Romans 8; this is one of those unutterable prayers. You cannot utter it, but you pray it to God, and God takes that prayer and through that prayer He does a mighty work, and the whole circumstances of Nehemiah were changed. Instead of being this privileged person in the palace, he was set free. And he was not just set free, Artaxerxes gave him everything they needed, all the provisions were released so that they could go back to Jerusalem and build the walls. I think that is what we see when we see Nehemiah.

Paul spoke about spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-20. The last three verses that he concludes with is the conclusion in the book of Nehemiah about the importance of prayer. This is the concluding burden, and I think there is a reason because when you deal with Ephesians, you are dealing with God's purpose in His Son to sum up all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10 and 3:10). All of this that is in Christ, the all various wisdom of God would be manifested through the church. It is all there, and at the end of it I believe he had to say something. Do you understand this thing that God has determined will come under direct and violent warfare—principalities, spiritual powers of wickedness, demonic forces? He concluded with that thought because he knew what would happen, and in those last few verses he talked about prayer.

Ephesians 6:18-20: "Praying at all seasons, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me in order that utterance might be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings, for which I am an ambassador bound with a chain, that I may be bold in it as I ought to speak."

Brothers and sisters, without this kind of concerted prayer, devoted prayer, persevering prayer, the saints will not be preserved and kept. That is how important it is. Not only that, the Word of God will not be released; it will be bound. And not only that, the Gospel, the mystery of the Gospel will not go forth. That is how important prayer is in warfare. That is what Paul understood, and that is what is so important.

I remember our history as a fellowship when we learned about corporate prayer. We are a very privileged people. I never heard that word in my first year as a believer. But thank God, when I came into the midst of you dear brothers and sisters, (of course, many of you were not here) and I will never forget when Brother Kaung and Brother Lance ministered to us, and they brought to us an understanding that we had never heard before. Look into Lance's book, "The School of Prayer." What a powerful book! We used to have conferences on this School of Prayer. We used to have conferences on binding and loosing. We used to have sessions of training where we would pray together, all filled with Lance's colorful illustrations.

Another book of Lance's is "Warring the Good Warfare." Does that not sound like it would be appropriate to reread in light of this message. Think of Brother Nee's book, "The Prayer Ministry of the Church." I will not ask you to raise your hand if you have not read "The Prayer Ministry of the Church." But if you haven't read "The Prayer Ministry of the Church" please read it. It brings us into a new discovery of the power of prayer in warfare, and Brother Kaung in our early years taught us these things.

By the way, he was coming from New York at first once a month, and then from Washington DC once a month after that. But when he moved to Richmond, he was with us in our prayer time on Wednesday night. We did not know how to pray; we were just a bunch of young people with a few older people. But he began every Wednesday night with a lesson which ended up being forty-one lessons, and it is all recorded now in "Teach Us to Pray." The last one, number 41, in case you do not think it is important, is for the nations. How we need to return to our roots and be devoted to corporate prayer! This is what changed certain defeat into exceptional victory in the book of Nehemiah.

The Importance of Weapons

The next thing you need to know is the importance of weapons. I have never seen a construction site like Nehemiah's. I do not want to tell you how many construction sites I have been to in my career as a designer, and they are still bugging me by the way even though I am retired. Jim told me the other day, "Your name is gone, why do you bother?" They are still bugging me; I am going to a construction site in a few weeks for them.

I have never seen one where they had spears and bows and guns. I would freak out. What a construction site that wall was! But with such intense warfare, they realized the importance of weapons.

Do you realize the importance of weapons? Do you understand that is the reason Ephesians 6:10-18 was written? It is that we would discover the importance of spiritual weapons in the middle of the spiritual warfare. Without knowing that power in spiritual weapons, you cannot overcome in warfare. It is abundantly clear with Paul. He took the elite Roman soldier, a million-man army, including the ancillary staff that conquered most of the known world, and reigned over most of the known world for 500 years. They were the ultimate warriors at the time, and what he sites was their weapons. You remember the whole list? You remember the girdle of truth? You remember the breastplate of righteousness? You remember the sword, the Word of God? You remember the helmet of salvation? You remember the sandals shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? These weapons made the most fierce warriors the world had ever known. In fact, they were the conquerors; they were not the victims, the laborers. This is what Ephesians 6 means.

Do you know what the Bible goes on to say even more terrific? It says in the Authorized Version, This battle armament in the soldier's war was "the whole armor of God." In the Darby version that I use, it is the "panoply of God," which means the whole armor of God. As a matter of fact, that word "panoply" only occurs in Ephesians 6:11, 13 and in Luke 11:22, with only two people. It is God Himself as the whole armor of God. But then he comes into the house of that strong man, Satan, the one who is trying to end His purpose, and He takes away from him his panoply and disarms him, the only two occurrences.

The Bible describes these weapons in II Corinthians 10:4-5: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Now you understand. Nehemiah said that they had their spears, their bows, their swords, and they did not put them down. They slept in Jerusalem overnight, and it says so clear that their weapon was always at their side. Brothers and sisters, we have been given the most powerful weapons in warfare that has ever been created. They had the weapons of God.

Now when you look at the history of warfare I talked about, the one thing that has changed is not warfare; it is weapons. You remember that our primitive fathers, maybe some still do, have sharpened sticks and rocks, and they throw them at one another, and they poke one another. But now when you look at the weapons, how powerful they are! Laser guided drones that can be shot

from hundreds of miles, smart weapons that can hit your kitchen table unmanned. I happen to say that, up in New Jersey at the brother's home where the church gathers. He had gone out to get us lunch, and he walked back in just as I said, "Laser guided bomb that would hit his kitchen table and blow it to smithereens." And he said, "What's happening?" Do you think the weapons we sent to Ukraine are of some great strength compared to the weapons that are given to us as believers? They are the most powerful weapons because they are divine weapons. You see the difference? In ten or fifteen years they will have weapons that will dwarf the weapons we have now, but never like the power of divine weapons.

Who Fights for Us?

There is something above everything else we need to know. We need to know who fights for us. There is not a more important thing to know than this.

Nehemiah 4:19-20: "And I said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and extended, and we are scattered upon the wall, one far from another: In what place you hear the sound of the trumpet, thither shall you assemble to us; our God will fight for us."

If you never thought you had a chance in spiritual warfare, that diabolical assault of all the enemies of God, read that verse when you get up in the morning. Read that verse, underline that verse in your Bible, read it in the night, write it upon your mirror, get a tattoo if you want, our God will fight for us. Can there be anything more wonderful than that? If you think it is you fighting; it is not you fighting. This was Nehemiah's secret, and he held it; "our God will fight for us."

You remember the story of Jehoshaphat and how this great army was coming against them, and they did not know what to do (II Chronicles 20:1-30). You remember what happened. There was a great assemblage coming to destroy them, and the first thing they did was pray. That was smart. He understood, and they understood. They gathered in the temple, and they prayed. They said, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." What a prayer! You deal with this enemy; we cannot take on this enemy by ourselves, but You deal with him. That was the story.

Then a prophet stood up in their midst and said, "Fear not; you are not going to have to fight; God is going to fight for you." And they did the strangest thing; they sent the singers out first. That is a bad warfare plan. I feel sorry for those singers; I would be going, "Oh no, what is going to happen to the singers?" But God went before them, and the enemy was destroyed. It took three days for them to pick up the spoils because the one lesson of most importance in spiritual warfare is that our God will fight for us. Isn't that precious!

This is the other thing he says, "When you hear the trumpet, assemble together." Assembling is important. People who say assembling is not important are not well studied in the Word. They do not understand what the Lord said, when He said, "Where two or three are gathered, there I will be in your midst."

There was a campaign of the U. S. Army, and it was a complete blunder. I am not a marketing man, and that is why I hired a marketing lady. But they came up with this phrase in 2001, "An Army of One." Forgive me, maybe I am just so base-line ignorant that I do not think an army of

one is an army; it may be a soldier of one. But they developed this ad campaign. How much did our federal government pay for this brilliant ad campaign, "An Army of One" to build up the enlistment in the U.S. Army? It was a miserable failure. Five years later they came up with a new ad campaign. (The only people who get rich are marketers and lawyers.) They came up with a new ad campaign, "Army Strong." Thank God, we are part of God's great army, and thank God He fights for us.

In that first battle in Jericho, the captain of the Lord of hosts appeared before the battle. There was a singular lesson they had to learn, "I am the Captain of the hosts of the army of God. I will fight for you." When they forgot that lesson in Ai, they were defeated. This is the overwhelming secret to the battle.

Brothers and sisters, this is the burden that the Lord put upon my heart. There is a tremendous battle over Jerusalem, one like nothing we have ever seen. Why? Because it is where God gets what He wants for His Son and in a people, and it is His ultimate gift to Himself, a peculiar treasure. That is why the battle is so great. We need to know what the battle is over. It is not over you getting a job or getting a new car or your children doing well in school. There is a battle over that if you are a believer, but it is not what *the* battle is over. We need to know the power of prayer; it is a secret of great power. And we need to give ourselves to prayer individually and corporately. We need to know the importance of weapons. We are given the most powerful weapons in this universe; they are God's weapons, mighty in God. And above all we need to know one thing, our God fights for us. That is the reason we never need to hang our heads. That is the reason we never need to despair. Not only did John record the final victory, therefore we know the scene before it is ever played out, but we know who is doing the fighting. And with Him as the Captain of the hosts, He will never fail.

Shall we pray:

Lord, we bow before you and say again to You, "You alone have the words of eternal life." Where we have missed the mark, Lord, make adjustments in our spirit, and cause us to hear what is in Your heart. But oh Lord, we want to pray that Your Holy Spirit would speak to us, and we would be a people who sees what is in Your heart. We would be a people who long for what is in Your heart. We would be a people that it would be a part of our daily living, our experience. And we would be a people knowing all the provision you have made that can overcome in this warfare. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.