

1. Continue our look at spiritual warfare in book of Nehemiah – seen 5 attacks

- A. Doubting the call
- B. Misdirected focus
- C. Discouragement
- D. The Enemies exaggerated strength
- E. Resistance from your own people

Thought: These are common attacks anybody who is making a difference for God will see

- A. Want to know more about this – our website has all the sermons for you to listen too!

2. Seen Nehemiah's 5-fold response in leading these people who are under attack

- A. **Recognize** - the low spots – be honest about where you are vulnerable to attack
 - 1). How can you tell? Easy! It's where you've fallen before
- B. **Resist** – by putting up guards at those weak points
 - 1). Scripture
 - 2). Prayer
 - 3). Accountability
 - 4). Sanctified common sense
- C. **Refocus** – get your eyes back on God instead of self and the enemy
 - 1). Put up your guards – then back to God – don't focus on your weakness – focus on Him
 - 2). Quote Scripture when tempted – but do it depending upon His strength – God saturated
- D. **Remember** – the importance of the work you are doing – the importance of fighting well
 - 1). Nehemiah had them fight with their family – to remind them of the importance
 - a). The devil wants it all – your family, career, reputation
 - b). It is important you fight well for God's glory and to protect what is dear to you
- E. **Return** – to that work that God has called you too

Transition: We add another important aspect for those who are under attack

- A. Where the body comes together to support each other

I. THE NECESSITY OF UNITY

Ne 4:19–20 (ESV) And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. ⁽²⁰⁾ In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, *rally to us there*. Our God will fight for us.”

1. To be effective in warfare the body of Grace Springs must pull together

- A. But any church that is active – will end up with its people being spread out
 - 1). We end up at the Spectrum, out with the homeless, the prayer booth, evangelism table
We have the Day Laborer ministry – Grace Missions OC will spread its wings more and more
- B. We can't always be together – but we have to be there for one another
 - 1). When the fight heats up for an individual – we must close those gaps of isolation
Ne 4:20 (ESV) In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there...

2. How do we close the gaps?

- A. We need to be a church that is praying for each other when we're separated
 - 1). We can stand arm to arm when we are separated by distance
 - 2). I pray daily for many of you – where I know your struggles – I'm closing that gap
- B. We need to be a church body that looks out for one another when were together

- 1). They knew they were under attack so they were alert – looking for the first signs
 - 2). Then the shout would go up – trumpet sound – calling all together to stand
- C. I think that is the perfect example of how a church should be – looking out for one another
- Php 2:4 (ESV) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, *but also to the interests of others.*
- 1). We see one down in the fight – we rush to them – stand with them – encourage them
 - 2). So blessed when I see members of our church praying for one another after the service
 - a). Don't be afraid to say "You OK? Can I pray for you?"

Transition: This is where we use our spiritual gifts

3. Using our spiritual gifts

- A. Be careful you don't think a church moving in spiritual gifts is one where everybody speaks in tongues
- 1). The Corinthian church was doing that and Paul rebuked them for being carnal
 - 2). He said it was ruining their testimony to the unbelievers who may come in

1 Co 14:23 (ESV) If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, *will they not say that you are out of your minds?*
 - 3). He said – 2 or 3 at the most – one at a time and only if there was interpretation
- B. Bible is very clear on why the Spiritual gifts are given
- 1 Cor 12:7 (NLT)** A spiritual gift is given to each of us *as a means of helping the entire church.*
- 1). You mean it's not just do I can get a personal tingle

3. An example of a church moving in the spiritual gifts – my prayer for us

The situation: A man loses his wife

- A. Those with the gift of mercy surround him in love – they listen – they pray
- B. Somebody with the gift of administration may take care of the funeral arrangements "I got this"
- C. Another with the gift of hospitality invites him to come into their home for dinner – so he won't be alone
- D. Another with the gift of giving may buy food and drop it off
- E. Another with the gift of helps gives their time to take care of the yard
 - 1). Removing that burden from the brother who is grieving

Point: When this happens it's like Christ Himself has reached down into that church

- A. This is a church that is moving in the gifts of the Spirit
- 1). Paul exhorts the body to move in spiritual gifts like this

1 Cor 14:12 (NIV) So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try *to excel in gifts that build up the church.*
 - 2). Each of you have been given gifts to build up the body – for the common good
 - a). He says "I want you to excel in those spiritual gifts. Gifts you can use to help the body. I want you to use your gift for the common good."
- B. Ask God what gifts you've been given then use them! *This is the path to joy!*
- 1). This is how you'll see the Spirit moving in your life – when you use the gifts He's given you!
 - a). Those spiritual gifts are empowered by Him – use them and you will see Him move
- C. A church – or an individual using these gifts will be alive and fresh
- Jn 7:38–39 (ESV) Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' ” ⁽³⁹⁾ *Now this he said about the Spirit...*
- 1). Rivers – that means life – movement – what happens when there is no movement = stagnation
 - a).

Question: Do you come to church to be a blessing or just be blessed?

Do you come to church to serve others or just be served?

- A. If it's just to be blessed, to be served = you will not escape stagnation

There has to be an outlet! You can't just keep taking in = boring

- 1). The outlet that will be effective is when you exercise that gift God's given you
 - a). That is where you will see Him flowing through you
- 2). Pray – God I want to know what it is – use me!

Thought: I hear people say - "I just want to see God move! Like in Acts!"

- A. Why did He move in Acts? Because they were serving Him – stepping out – taking risks
 - 1). He didn't just move to entertain them – but to validate – empower their service

Objection: Meet the needs of the body! Isn't that why we have a Pastor!

- A. God didn't give Pastors to the church to meet every need – they can't
 - 1). He gave Pastor's to train the body – from the scriptures – what God wants them to do
Eph 4:11–12 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and *teachers*, ⁽¹²⁾ *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*
 - 2). How is that training done – through solid Biblical teaching – studied over – prayed over
2 Ti 3:16–17 (ESV) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ⁽¹⁷⁾ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
- B. In a church that expects the Pastor to do everything – he gets burned out – nobody's needs are met
 - 1). *What God designed to be done by all cannot be done by one*
 - 2). The Bible calls the church a body – for a body to function correctly each member must do its part

4. My prayer – we will learn to close the gap quickly

- A. That God will give us Christian eyes that see when another is down in the fight
 - 1). That we will rush to them in support – using our gifts to help
1 Pe 4:10 (ESV) As *each* has received a gift, *use it* to serve one another, as *good stewards* of God's varied grace:
 - a). You are to be a good steward of that gift you've been given
 That means God expects you to use it when He gives you the opportunity
 - b). Because you are a steward you'll give account for how faithfully you did use it

Thought: I don't say any of this to be mean – I am again fighting for your joy

- A. This is one of the main ways you will experience God in your life
 - 1). As you serve others – He will pour Himself through you – when you don't He won't
 "I don't know why my Christianity is so boring!"
 - a). Are you serving others or are you focused only on you = boring
 - b). God cannot bless a self-centered life – I want you to enjoy your Christianity

5. One other thought – close the gaps by being a clique buster

- A. Make sure somebody doesn't feel isolated – ignored – especially somebody new
 - 1). Invite them out for coffee after the service – invite them into the group your talking with
 Ask their name – introduce yourself – close the gap

Transition: That brings us to the next attack – the opposite of this

II. THE ATTACK OF DIVISION

1. Right after Nehemiah's attempt for unity – the attack of division – of course

- A. Expect this to happen – devil tries to create problems between you and another member
 - 1). He doesn't want a body that works closely together – closing the gaps
 - a). A church standing with one another in prayer – encouraging one another

- 2). A church like that is dangerous – so he wants to widen those gaps – create division

Ne 5:1 (ESV) Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers.

1. The complaints of these people were just

- A. Their own people were loaning them money to buy food – charging exorbitant interest
- 1). To pay off the loans they were forced to sell their sons and daughters into slavery
 - 2). Common in those days – common today
- B. Nehemiah was very angry over this and confronts them
- Ne 5:9 (ESV)** So I said, “The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?”
- 1). When you act like this you’re not acting like people who know God
 - a). You’re providing an opportunity for our enemies to dishonor God

Thought: The truth whether we like it or not – people will form their view of God by the way we live

Ro 2:24 (ESV) For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

- A. This reality should always be in the forefront of our choices – our actions
- 1). How does this action reflect on God – does it dishonor Him or bring Him glory
- B. Nehemiah rebukes them – Act like people who know God! Honor Him with your life

Transition: One of the choices we are going to have to make is to care for each other

- A. Because the devil is involved – there will be a temptation to do the opposite

2. The devil knows if he can divide a church he can conquer that church

Mt 12:25 (ESV) ... *“Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste (ruined), and no city or house divided against itself will stand.”*

- A. So many works of God have ended simply because people can’t get along
- 1). It is the number one problem on the mission field – missionaries can’t get along with each other
 - 2). Amazes me – you’d think missionaries would be mature enough to work it out for God’s glory
- B. The devil is very subtle – Magnifying personality differences – causing suspicions

Today all you have to do is disagree with somebody on something and they get mad at you

Hudson Taylor: “...the feeling among us appears to have been worse than I could have formed any conception of. One was jealous because another had too many dresses, another because someone else had more attention. Some were wounded because of unkind controversial discussions, and so on. Thank God for bringing it out and removing it.

- 1). Forget the huge problems like selling sons and daughters into slavery
 - a). He defeats some with the smallest slight – *“Did she mean what I think she meant!”*
“Did you see that look he just gave me”
“Pastor walked by and didn’t say hi! I’m done with those people!”
 - 1a). Maybe he was just given some bad news he’s working through
- 2). We have to lose this self-centered focus – we are to exalt God and serve others

Bernard Baily: When science discovers the center of the universe, a lot of people will be disappointed to find they are not it.

Thought: The devil is always probing to find that weak believer he can pour through

- A. Be on guard against the beginning of any of these types of thoughts
- 1). Jealousy or envy over what another might possess
 - a). New car! 80” TV! Another new dress! – what business is it of yours!
 - 2). Suspicions placed in the mind – “I’ll bet there.....” – Stop guessing at others motives!
 - a). I know people like that – always think they have other people figured out – they don’t
 - 3). Jealous over how somebody else is used in the church

My experience – I was teaching at a church – filling in for the Pastor when he was sick

- a). Suddenly a man replaced me – I didn't think he was a good teacher
I got bitter and jealous – How come I'm not teaching!
- b). Eventually the Lord spoke to me about my sin – my jealousy – self-centeredness
 - 1a). I felt like I was to pray for him instead – for anointing – for blessing
 - 2a). it wasn't long after I started to do that honestly – I started teaching again
- c). ***God couldn't use me in that selfish – envious state – He had to deal with that first***

Thought: I'm constantly amazed at the little things Christians divide over – can be so stubborn

A stubborn old farmer was plowing his field. A neighbor, who was watching as he tried to guide the mule, finally said, "I don't want to butt in, but you could save yourself a lot of work by saying 'gee' and 'haw', instead of jerking on the reins." The old timer mopped his brow and replied, "Yep, I know; but this here mule kicked me 6 years ago, and I ain't spoke to him since!"

- A. He needed to get over with it - and get on with plowing the fields in an efficient manner
 - 1). Six years of wasted time over a petty little thing
- B. How many years some Christians waste - because of some little feud - remain bitter and unusable
 - 1). Trade in God's blessings in their lives to cling to some resentment – not worth it

Question: Be honest. What does that accomplish? What does holding a grudge ever add to your life?

- A. I guarantee you that nobody will ever say – when asked what enriched your life the most
"Easy. It was that time I stayed bitter at the brother for 3 years. Sweet time!"
 - 1). That grudge does nothing but bring personal misery along with it
 - a). It will block God's blessing in your life
 - 2). Husband and wives get bitter at one another – where is that going to get you?
 - b). Stops you from being useable and effective in the Kingdom
- B. I have spent so much time in the middle of people fighting – counseling sessions
 - 1). Married couples – friends – business partners
 - a). The solution – bottom line is always for at least one party – many times both
"You say you're a Christian. Act like it!
See what really matters. How is this bringing God glory?"

Thought: Isn't it time we just started to do with the Bible tells us to do

- A. Reading a book some months ago – on Christianity in the Middle East
 - 1). They've stopped referring to new believers as Christians
 - a). Because so many believe they're Christians just because they have a mental assent
But they don't act like Christians – the Bible isn't what governs their life
 - 2). So they started calling these new converts "Followers of Jesus Christ"
 - a). Because that is what the Bible calls a believer
 - b). If you're not a follower you're not a Christian – Christians hear His voice and follow Him
 - 1a). He becomes the focus of their life – while all other idols MUST be cast down

Transition: This is so important – we got to get this one right – this will be a common attack

III. SOME PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP US

1. Be willing to be wronged

- A. Keep in mind the importance of the work
 - 1). Far too important to let some little dispute take you out of the fight
 - 2). Don't let a personal grudge ruin what God wants to do in your life

B. But I can't get over it – But you need too!

1). Jesus got over it while they were nailing nails in His hands

Lk 23:34 (ESV) And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

a). He wants to help you get past it – to enjoy life – enjoy your Christianity

2). You're only hurting yourself – you stay bitter – beat people up in your mind

a). They don't even know it – it's gaining you nothing but emotional distress

3). Get over it for your own spiritual health

Point: Be willing to be wronged for the sake of the work – too important

Listen to this command: Col 3:12-13 (NLT) Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (13) You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. **Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you MUST forgive others.**

A. That's not a suggestion – that is a command – Christian you are to hear His voice there and follow Him

B. Here's another command – this is all over the NT

1 Pe 3:9 (ESV) Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, **for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.**

1). Preach to yourself the truth – this scripture commands me to act in a certain way

Since I am a Christian I MUST believe what it says – I must respond to it correctly

2). This tells me – I'm not to retaliate when I've been mistreated

I will not speak ill of them to others – repaying evil for evil

a). I understand if I am to be blessed I must bless instead – I will pray for them

b). I will make allowance for their faults like Christ has made allowance for mine

I will forgive them like Christ has forgiven me

C. Here's the Words of Jesus on this issue

Mt 5:43–48 (ESV) “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁽⁴⁴⁾ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁽⁴⁵⁾ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁽⁴⁶⁾ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁽⁴⁷⁾ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁽⁴⁸⁾ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

1). Love your neighbor and hate your enemy – YES. I like that! Got that one down.

2). But God says – No! You're to be different – you're to treat your enemy like I did

a). Father forgive them – as they're hammering the nails in

D. But this is hard! I know – who told you it was going to be easy to die to self to walk with the Lord

1). It is the path to blessing and the abundant life – but who told you it would be easy!

2). You are called to a holy war against yourself – a sacred violence against your flesh

Rom 8:12-14 (NIV) Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. (13) For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, (14) because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Transition: So be willing to be wronged for the cause of Christ

A. Put to death that flesh that wants to rise up and retaliate – Scripture does not allow that

Again: Lk 6:27–28 (ESV) “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,⁽²⁸⁾ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

1). Not easy – but also NOT an option! These are the Words of our LORD

B. So be quick to forgive – next step to keep the unity that brings God glory

2. Be quick to make it right with those you have wronged

Turn: Mat 5:23-24 (NIV) “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

- A. Notice the urgency of this - "Before you go to God get it right with your brothers and sisters"
 - 1). This stops the enemy from driving in a wedge between us - declares him in that situation
 - 2). This tells us that our vertical relationship with God cannot be right
When our horizontal relationships with our brothers and sisters are wrong
- B. This means you may have to have a truthful talk – straighten some things out
 - 1). I’ve been upset but let me tell you why – speak the truth in love
 - 2). You’re trying to get the relationship back into a healthy place

3. What if I go – try to make it right and they don’t want to be reconciled

- A. Then be at peace with God – you have done what you can do
Ro 12:17–18 (ESV) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ⁽¹⁸⁾ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
 - 1). You can’t force them to respond properly – just do what is right before God then rest
 - a). Pray that God would bless them by bringing them to a place they will let it go
- B. But even if they won’t budge – you must forgive them – giving the situation away to God
Ro 12:18–19 (ESV) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”
 - 1). Turn the whole thing over to God – Father they won’t listen to me – They won’t be reconciled
I have tried – I am not going to cling to this – I give it to you – you handle this situation
- C. Regardless of how they respond – you must do this for your spiritual health
 - 1). To carry a grudge will destroy you – damage you – it always does
Heb 12:14–15 (ESV) Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ⁽¹⁵⁾ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;
Adrian Rogers: “Bitterness blows out the candle of joy and leaves the soul in darkness”

CONCLUSION

- 1. **We have seen the need for unity - let's close the gaps quickly**
 - A. Using our gifts for the common good
 - B. And being "Clique busters"
- 2. **We have seen there will be an attack on unity**
 - A. Be mature enough to be willing to be wronged - for the sake of the greater cause
 - B. Let's be willing to quickly make it right when we've wronged another - to remove the wedge