

Dissension, Doubt, and Determination # 9

Nehemiah 4: 7-14

As we begin our study this evening, it is interesting to note that this passage begins the same as our last study: [But it came to pass....](#) That is a phrase that has always interested me while studying God's Word. It reveals many things in various passages, but I want to mention a couple things related to that phrase in this passage.

- 1. The work had to go on; there was no place to slow down or quit.**
- 2. In light of this context, the opposition remained. As long as we live upon this earth, with a desire and commitment to serve God, we will face adversity.**
- 3. Nehemiah and the others were opposed, but God had kept them; they were still there laboring on the wall. Storms will come, but they will not last forever!**

This is an insightful passage that reveals an abundance of truth. Sanballat, Tobiah, and a host of others were opposed to the work that the Jews sought to accomplish. There was a pessimistic attitude that began to develop from within. And yet, in the face of all the hurdles Nehemiah faced, he was determined to complete the task he was called to perform. I want to consider three different attitudes as we think on: [Dissension, Doubt, and Determination](#).

I. The Dissension of the Enemy (7-9)

A. Their Observance (7) – [But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth.](#) Their observance reveals two distinct aspects that we need to consider.

1. The Awareness – They were constantly watching the progress of the workers, but when they noticed that the [walls were made up](#), they became increasingly alarmed. This world doesn't mind us being "busy" in our work, as long as we are not making any real progress. When we begin to accomplish something of value for the Lord, they will show up in opposition.

2. The Anger – At this point, the enemy became [very wroth](#). This has the idea of "*being exceedingly hot, or furious, to be consumed with anger.*" It appears that Sanballat and the others had begun to panic a bit over all that had been accomplished and they were furious. Don't expect the world to be happy about our progress. In fact, we ought to expect them to be genuinely angry with us. The enemy is never happy when the church prevails!

B. Their Objective (8) – *And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.* They had a common goal and that was to defeat the Jews as they labored on the wall. They were united in their cause and came together in opposition. We had met Sanballat, the Horonite; Tobiah, the Ammonite; and Geshem, the Arabian, but here we find that many others had joined with them, some of their people and even the Ashdodites.

- Our Lord has already won the victory for us; we are more than conquerors through Him, but it is dangerous when we underestimate the enemy. They may have very little in common when it comes to their personal agenda, but rest assured they will come together in opposition to the church. (I hate to admit it, but that is one area where they have an advantage. The modern church is so splintered, even in Baptist circles, that we can't mount a united effort against the opposition. We are too focused on demanding that others do everything just as we do if we are to work with them in any fashion. There are times when we must lay aside petty differences for the good of the church as a whole!)

C. Their Obstacle (9) – *Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.* Things may have looked desperate, but Nehemiah and the others had a weapon that the enemy had not counted on: the power of prayer! When Nehemiah noticed the renewed campaign of attack, he immediately sought the Lord. We need to be reminded of the power of prayer. Our adversary has power, influence, and a host of people who are working to advance his cause, but they will never overcome the power of our Lord. Help and guidance are only a breath away!

- Also Nehemiah was not blind to their efforts. He knew they were there and sought to defeat them, so he set a watch to keep track of their advancements. As we have considered many times already, we need to be aware of where we are and even where the enemy is. We are engaged in a battle and we cannot afford to be sleeping on our watch!

I. The Dissension of the Enemy (7-9)

II. The Doubt of Judah (10-12) – Dissension from without is difficult enough, but doubt from within is particularly difficult. Notice the doubt of Judah.

A. They Spoke of Weakness (10a) – *And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.* Judah, one of the prominent and influential tribes among the people, declared that there was no strength to

continue. They saw it as a hopeless cause. They simply felt as if there wasn't enough strength to continue. They were ready to throw in the towel and abandon the effort altogether.

B. They Spoke of Weariness (10b) – *and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.* Judah viewed the task as one that was impossible to accomplish. There was just too much rubbish and refuge in the way. It seemed as if there was no way they would ever be able to rebuild the wall and secure the city.

- There are those within the church today who are weary in the work. They have surveyed the task at hand and see it as impossible. They have grown weary from past labor and simply cannot find the strength to continue.
- That is exactly how the adversary wants us to feel. He wants us to see our labor as a hopeless cause. He wants us to see a task that is impossible to fulfill. He wants us to lack faith that God is still able to move mountains.
- We are not laboring in our own ability. The task is too great for us to perform in ourselves, but it is too worthy to abandon. We must find the strength we need to press on in the fight. That strength is only found in the Lord.

C. They Spoke of With-drawl (11-12) – *And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.* The enemy put fear within their hearts. They feared their attack and the battle they might face. The Jews began to believe the words of Sanballat and Tobiah. They began to doubt their ability as well as God's power and ability. They were ready to abandon the work and desert Jerusalem.

- Many are no longer attending church or serving the Lord because they viewed their labor as impossible. They were weak and weary and chose not to fight another battle. They felt as if there was nothing left to stand for.
- Church that is exactly what the enemy wants us to believe. He wants to place fear and doubt within our hearts. We cannot abandon the work or flee the fight. There is too much at stake!

I. The Dissension of the Enemy (7-9)

II. The Doubt of Judah (10-12)

III. The Determination of Nehemiah (13-14) – Once again things looked desperate in Jerusalem. Many were fearful and afraid, but Nehemiah was determined. Notice how he responds to this latest encounter with the opposition.

A. He Set a Watch (13) – Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

Nehemiah knew the importance of watching for the enemy. He knew the people needed to be warned in advance of an attack. He strategically set watchmen, prepared for battle, along the wall to sound the alarm and defend the city.

- We have already touched on this, but the Lord has emphasized its importance yet again. We live in a society that has no use for the church. The enemy is seeking any avenue to defeat us and gain entrance among us. We must have some watchmen on the wall who are prepared to sound the alarm and stand firm in defense of the church and God's people.

B. He Spoke with Wisdom (14) – Nehemiah was called of God to rebuild the city wall and he was determined to complete the task. Here we find the wisdom he shared with the people.

1. He Spoke of Courage – *Be not afraid.* Things may have looked bad on the surface; it may have seemed as if all hope was gone, but God was still in control. There was nothing to fear as long as He was in their midst! *Rom.8:31 – What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 1 Jn.4:4 – Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. Is.41:10 – Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

2. He Spoke of Confidence – *remember the Lord, which is great and terrible.* Nehemiah reminded them to whom they belonged. God had allowed their captivity, but yet He had kept them through it all. They served the Almighty God. He had brought the people out of Egypt with a mighty strong hand. He had delivered them from the enemies in Canaan. Now He had allowed them to return to Jerusalem. They were secure in the Lord!

- When it seems as if the world is gaining the upper hand, look to Jesus. When it appears that you are facing certain defeat, trust in the Lord. He has not brought us this far to abandon us now. There is a lot that I am uncertain about, but my Lord is not in that category. I am safe and secure in Him!

3. He Spoke of Commitment – *and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.* There was too much at stake to lose this battle. Failure was not an option. Their families and their future depended on their success. This was not just about their feelings or priorities; the future of the nation rested upon them.

- We need that same commitment. There is too much at stake in our day. Our children need a place to find help and direction for their lives. They need a place of shelter from the world. There are those who have never heard of Jesus that need us to continue so they too might be saved. Our community and our nation need the church to remain strong. We cannot quit; we cannot relax, and we cannot fail!

As we come together this evening to study God's Word and worship Him, the attitudes that we have considered are prevalent all around us. It is possible that each of these attitudes is represented tonight. I pray none among us have an attitude of dissension, but it is possible. I am almost certain that there is an attitude of doubt in the hearts of some. These attitudes are not of the Lord. Satan likes to breed division and doubt, but God desires unity and determination. I pray that we will be as Nehemiah and develop an attitude of determination, so that we can engage in the work we've been assigned with full assurance and commitment.