

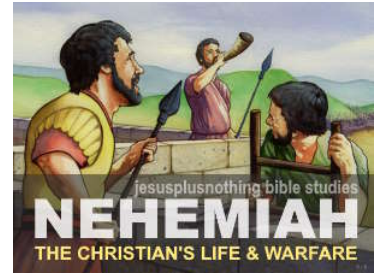
Nehemiah: The Christian's Life and Warfare

by I Gordon

jesusplusnothing.com

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Acknowledgements

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Nehemiah: An Introduction to the book and types

Background to the Book

The book of Nehemiah was written by, wait for it, Nehemiah, between 445-425 BC. Along side Ezra, it records the fulfilment of God's promise to restore Israel to her land after the 70-year exile in Babylon. The warnings to Israel as a nation had been around for some time but they came to a head in 605 BC where the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the nation as is recorded in **Jeremiah 25:1-12**:

So Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people of Judah and to all those living in Jerusalem: 'For twenty-three years - from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day - the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention... Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: 'Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations... This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,' declares the LORD.'

History records that in 586 BC this came about exactly as Jeremiah had predicted and for the next 70 years the people of Israel and Judah were in exile and their beloved city, Jerusalem, was destroyed. After this period, some of the exiles returned to Jerusalem, but being a city without walls or protection, the Jewish remnant were always at the mercy of their ever-present enemies. The book of Nehemiah starts then, with this as its background.

The Types and Players in Nehemiah

This study is not about history however. It's about today and our Christian life. I believe the Holy Spirit has placed within this book key characters and events that reveal to us today the basis of our walk and warfare as Christians. I looked up a commentary on this book and it stated that it was a useful book for 'building projects and leadership skills'. Sorry but none of that interests me so you won't find it here. What you will find however are important steps that this book teaches us in how to overcome our three deadly enemies - Satan, the world and our old sinful nature. The basis of this study then, revolves around certain key individuals, their character, and the work that they were attempting to do. Obviously, the main character is *Nehemiah* himself, whose job it was to rebuild the *wall* and its *gates*. While he had many enemies, the three most prominent were *Sanballat*, *Tobiah*, and *Geshem*. So to understand what this book is about, and especially how it could possibly relate to us today, we have to start by defining these key components first.

The Wall

No surprises here. In the natural sense, the wall surrounded Jerusalem, and was broken only by 10 gates. The wall kept the wrong people out, while the gates let the right people in. The walls were for protection and showed the separation between the people of God, and His enemies. The walls represent our salvation, specifically from the power of sin. This is stated clearly in **Isaiah 60:18**, which states, *"But you will call your walls salvation and your gates praise."* Throughout the OT, the walls represented both the whole nation of Israel as well as individuals. An example of the former is where King David prayed, *"By your favour do good to Zion, build the walls of Jerusalem"* (**Psalms 51:18**). King Solomon stated the later when he wrote, *"Like a city that is broken into and without walls, so is a man who has no control over his spirit."* (**Proverbs 25:28**)



Therefore the rebuilding of the walls can speak to us of our own individual lives or as Gods people today, his body, the church. And while most of this study is for the individual, both aspects will be looked at.

The Gates

The gates represent entrance into the Lord's presence and the experiences of the Lord that the righteous will enter into. This will be examined in chapter 3 of Nehemiah but for now just a few quick quotes concerning gates:

Isaiah 26:1-2 "He sets walls... for security (salvation). Open the gates that the righteous may enter, the one that remains faithful."

Psalms 100:4 "Enter his gates with thanksgiving..."

Jesus himself is the only way by which we can enter into the presence of God, so it is no surprise that he said

John 10:7 "Truly, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep...if anyone enters through me he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

Nehemiah

I believe that a 'big picture' survey of this book shows that Nehemiah is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who gave up his position with the Father to restore and rebuild our lives. Nehemiah's name means 'Yahweh consoles' or 'Yahweh comforts' and that certainly is what Jesus is to us. I will try to point out in the study when and where he is a type of the Lord. One thing is sure and that is in all that he does, we see the attitude and action of a man alive to God. One that is spiritually reborn and living by that Spirit. And then we have the 'baddies'!

Beware these three enemies... even in your own life!

Sanballat

The name "Sanballat" means "Hatred in secret". Lovely name! In the study to come we shall see that he is the main man behind most of the attacks. He was very wealthy, and had a lot of influence, power and control. As we shall see, he stands for our biggest enemy, Satan, the hater of Gods people.

Geshem

The name Geshem means "Corporeality", which, cause I didn't know, means "Physical, tangible, material, bodily". The second enemy then speaks of the world! - That which is physical, tangible etc. He might not be mentioned much, but his form of warfare against Nehemiah is very subtle indeed, and is used when others have failed.

Tobiah

The name Tobiah means, "Jehovah is good". A strange name indeed for someone who so vigorously opposes Jehovah's chosen people! In all of his operations Tobiah will clearly show himself to be our third enemy, Old Adam, the flesh.

Tobiah speaks of the sinful nature that not only does bad, but has a great tendency to also do good! (And, as we shall see, he will trick a large percentage of Gods people through this means!)

Nehemiah Chapter 1: Understanding the nature of the fall

Neh 1:1-3 – The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, *in* the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped *and* had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. And they said to me, 'The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.'

The book of Nehemiah begins then, where any true salvation or revival has to start – with a realisation of your spiritual condition. Nehemiah¹, asking of the Jews, and of Jerusalem's condition was told, *"The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire."* Lets pause for a moment and think of what this picture means. Out of the whole world, God had chosen but one nation – Israel. This nation was chosen to be his people, display his glory and bring understanding and light to the other nations of the world. The rest of the world was, and is, as John tells us *"in the power of the evil one."* (**1 John 5.19**). The whole world was in spiritual darkness, blinded by the god of this age. (**2 Cor 4.4**) Their only hope came in the form of a small nation called Israel, who alone had the knowledge of the true God. And this nation was now completely destroyed! Broken and burnt to the ground, there now remained no walls of salvation, no gates to enter Gods presence and no visible sign of the living God on earth! It was Satan's day as the entire world was in his control.

This scenario speaks of more than just Jerusalem 2500 years ago. It speaks to us today of our own state, both to those who have not known the Lord and to those who have become Christians, yet who have let their walls of salvation get broken down and now find themselves in this same distressed state. We will examine this further later on, but for now I would just like to draw your attention to the depths of the fall of mankind and the predicament in which the world is left in.

The extent of the fall

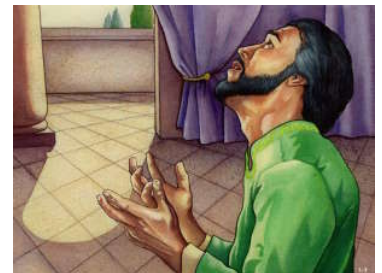
Like the nation of Israel, we were all created to know, enjoy, and display the glory of God and one act of disobedience left us destitute and void of his spirit – spiritually dead and under the control of another spirit that works in the sons of disobedience (**Eph 2.1-2**). Everyone born is born into such a condition. That is the nature of the fall. Spiritually dead, in the power of the evil one, and totally useless for that which we were created for; to love and give glory to God. Like Israel was in Nehemiah's day, so is the world in which we live today.

Even as Christians, those who have been restored to 'normality', Nehemiah speaks to us because we too often find ourselves displaying little of the light that is within us. We now are the light and salt of the earth – a visible witness of the living God to the world, and Satan will do all he can to destroy that witness. So how are your walls today? Is there a clear separation between how you operate and how the world operates? Are your goals, attitudes, and morals any different from those in the world around you? If not then look again at how restoration of those walls began through Nehemiah's attitude.

Driven to Prayer

Neh 1:4 Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

We have seen earlier that it starts with a realization of your actual condition. It progresses on here to action concerning that condition. When Nehemiah learnt of the true state of Jerusalem he *"sat down and wept and mourned for days."* The picture is of a man coming to God on Gods terms. Not for money, power, or the latest buzz, but for forgiveness and the restoration of life. Not offering God his good works as if that could impress God, but with repentance and faith in the character of God, he sought God that this condition would not remain! Also note here that God is called 'the God of Heaven'. In earlier times, God had been called 'the God of heaven and the God of earth' (**Gen 24:3**). Not now. Nehemiah was honest in seeing that because of the state of His people, God no longer had a visible witness on earth.



Neh 1:5-11 And I said, 'I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and loving kindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, let your ear now be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant which I am praying before you now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel

Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against you; I and my father's house have sinned. 'We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, or the statutes, or the ordinances, which you did command, Thy servant Moses. 'Remember the word which Thou didst command your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.' 'And they are Thy servants and Thy people whom you did redeem by your great power and by your strong hand. 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, may your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and the prayer of your servants who delight to revere your name, and make your servant successful today, and grant him compassion before this man.' Now I was the cupbearer to the king.

Verses 5-11 give us Nehemiah's prayer and it is very interesting to read an example of a godly prayer at a time like this. Nehemiah begins in verse 5 by reminding God of both His character and covenant promises to Israel if they loved Him. He then correctly confesses their sins as a nation, not in any way trying to hide from the fact that they have brought this upon themselves. In verse 8 he again reminds God of His promise to restore Israel if they returned to Him and in verse 10 he states that Israel are God's people whom he has so faithfully redeemed and protected in the past. Overall, it is a prayer of repentance based entirely on the promises, purposes, and faithfulness of God as they turn once again to Him.

Nehemiah himself, we are told, was *"the cupbearer to the king."* (vs 11) This was a very important position, as he would taste the King's wine to make sure it was not poisoned. He was therefore a trusted and close ally to the king. Nehemiah however, was willing to leave this position and like Moses before him *"choose to endure the ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt."* **Heb 12:25-26**).

Nehemiah thought more for God's people and the restoration of God's glory than he did for himself. This should be our attitude. This action of course, is but a small picture of him who *"though he were rich, yet for our sake became poor, so that through his poverty we might become rich"* **(2 Cor 8:9)** ²

Nehemiah Chapter 2: The Reproach, the Rock & the Rubble

Neh 2:1-8 And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, 'Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.' Then I was very much afraid. And I said to the king, 'If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.' ...And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

Neh 2:9-20 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days... So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and its gates, which were consumed by fire. Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass...Then I said to them, 'You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach...' Then they said, 'Let us arise and build.' So they put their hands to the good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, 'What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?' So I answered them and said to them, 'The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.'

The Reproach : (

Neh 2:17 '...Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach...'

Having been granted favour and leave by the Persian King, we read in chapter 2:11-18 of Nehemiah's first inspection of Jerusalem. For three days he saw the situation first hand and could see the devastation and destruction of Gods city. After the inspection, again we are told, *"You can see the situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach."* (vs 17) Why were they a reproach while in that condition? Again, because faced with enemies on every side who had their own gods, Jerusalem alone stood for the city of the true God. They were the people of God. Of all the nations, they alone had been adopted into Gods family (**Ex 4:22**), given the promises and covenants (Gen 12, Gen 15, **2 Sam 7:12-16**). It was this thought I believe that saddened Nehemiah before the king earlier in the chapter, for we read, *"Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"* (Ch 2:3) As he remembered Israel's fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how it all began - the faith of the patriarchs, the miraculous interventions of God, the promises and the glorious position they gave... And Israel now, its city destroyed, its people exiled and its God silent - a reproach to the name of their God.



The parallel of course, seems to fit with the people of God today, the church. With the wall that separates us from the world being taken apart brick by brick, many in the western church don't seem to know the difference between godliness and worldliness anymore. Like Nehemiah, our thoughts go back to how it all began where *"they continually devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common ... praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their numbers daily those that were being saved."* (**Acts 2:42-47**). The question must be asked - Is the Laodicean³ Church that we see in the west today, any better off today than Israel was in Nehemiah's day?

The Rock Of Our Foundation!

Neh 2:13 'Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass...'

Enough moaning. What was the solution? What had to happen first? We read that when Nehemiah inspected the wall he *"passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass."* (vs 13) In other words, the rubble from the smashed stonewalls was so high that he couldn't get past. Obviously, the first thing that had to happen if any restoration was going to take place was to get rid of this stinking rubbish! They had to get back to the cities foundation. There is no way that they would have tried to build a wall on top of a huge mound of broken stones. Not very

smart, not very secure! No, they had to get rid of the rubble cause it was preventing a solid wall of protection from being built, and it clogged up the gates denying the people of God access into his presence.

No prizes for guessing what foundation they had to get back to. *"According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor 3:10-11) The only foundation given in the word is Jesus himself, and any work built upon any other foundation will always end in how Jerusalem is pictured here - rubble! Years of hard work had gone into Jerusalem's walls and it had all come to nothing. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead gives us both the foundation and the means by which we can actually begin building our lives (or the church). The bible tells of those who remain spiritual babies being *"tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine"* because they are *"not accustomed to the word of righteousness..."* (Eph 4.14, Heb 5:13). They have little protection because they still don't understand the foundation that Jesus himself is their righteousness. They don't understand the implications of his death, so can never progress onto his resurrection.



What will you build on?

In recent times however, other builders have told us that they have found a new type of foundation upon which you can build very successfully. A very old builder called Geshem said that money and worldly success laid a great foundation to build on. I think he added that God wants you to be rich. The builder Tobiah recently said that good works were the way to go (actually many builders have tried to use this for years). He also stated that some magnificent buildings had been made on this foundation once the builder had increased their effort, cleaned every spot off their garment and were up to date confessing every bad thought and deed. Do this and he guarantees it will work. Well, we'll see later what became of this builder. But in the meantime some still prefer that old foundation being *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."* (Eph 2:20-21)

Clear That There Rubble!

Neh 2:18 'Then they said, 'Let us arise and build.' So they put their hands to the good work.'

So, we know what the foundation is, but how do we get to it? Who wants to be a rubbish removal man? Not a very nice job. For the saved individual who has just seen how desolate his life is, and has prayed in faith based on the promises of God, there is a new life awaiting him. But it involves a new way of thinking and a clearing out of the rubbish that would seek to bind him to his old life. This rubbish is simply the remains of your own attempt to build your life independent of God. It may be your worldly thoughts and attitudes or maybe something of your past associations with Sanballat as in **Acts 19:19** where *"those who practised magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone."*

For the church as a whole the rubbish is obviously more public and therefore the removal of it causes a bigger stink. There are always a lot of people who want to build the walls of the church, but not a lot who are brave enough to suggest that there is a heck of a lot of rubble, and rubble can't be built on! It was even discouraging in Nehemiah's day, as in Judah it was said *"The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish and we ourselves are unable to build the wall."* (Chapter 4:10). It's not a very rewarding job clearing rubbish! You could have asked Dave Hunt back in his day (he is now with the Lord) and others that do that role today. But at least in Nehemiah's day they knew that they had to remove the rubbish before they could build on a solid foundation. We just seem to carry on building as if everything is fine and then watch it topple over! And surprised that God didn't come through or allow it to stand, we then double our efforts and find, like Israel travelling in circles throughout the wilderness, that more effort only brings you back to where you began quicker! Surely all the calls stating that the next great revival is just around the corner are not taking the current rubble into account. No, Nehemiah did it right. See the depth of the problem, cry out to God, get rid of the rubbish, build and restore glory to God's name on the only foundation worth mentioning - Jesus.

The Rubbish Removal Man's Arch Nemesis

Neh 2:19 'But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, 'What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?'

Not everyone likes rubbish removal men it seems. We see here the three great enemies that will combat Nehemiah continually in his mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. And it is these three enemies we face when we determine to turn and follow God whole-heartedly. The rest of my Nehemiah study will focus on these three characters but for now let's just look at how Nehemiah responded to them. Faced with the mockery of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem he told them "

The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem." (Ch 2:20).

Yes, the God of Heaven will grant success over these enemies when we turn and trust in Him.

And it is also true that nothing of the old creation will remain in the New Jerusalem!⁴ That is a day I look forward to... but for now there is a battle as we shall see in the remaining part of this series.



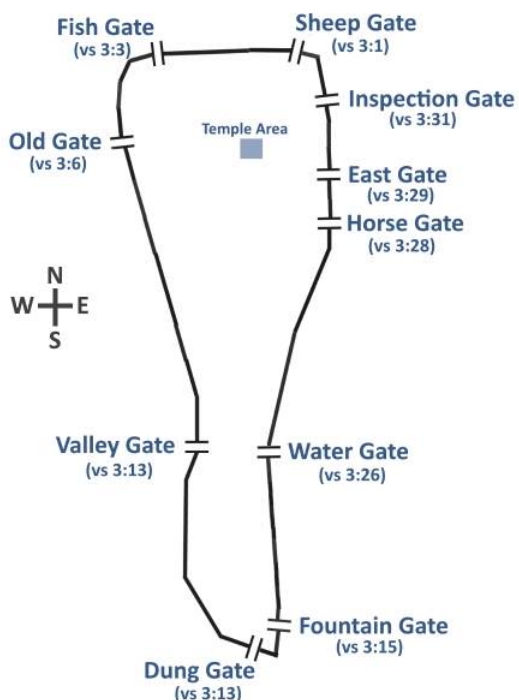
Nehemiah Chapter 3: The Gates of Spiritual Progression

Nehemiah 3:1-8: 'Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors... Now the sons of Hassenah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs... And Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and its bars... And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.'



If you have been a Christian long enough you'll know that God likes to hide things. What I mean by that is He likes to hide important gems of truth in places that you wouldn't initially expect to find them... until you start to dig that is! Nehemiah chapter 3 is one of those places. On the surface it is a chapter discussing 10 different gates around Jerusalem and the specific builders that helped rebuild them. But that's just the surface. There is a spiritual meaning in these gates! When you lift the lid and look a little deeper you find that God has hidden within those gates significant spiritual truth for both an individual's Christian life, as well as His prophetic plan for the ages.⁵ Now that's quite a big call I know but stay with me! The order and position of each gate is also very specific and gives us insight into the journey that God takes each of His children on as well as the journey of the church as a whole until the return of Jesus Christ. So for each gate we will explore it's meaning for both the personal and prophetic significance. So what do the gates of Jerusalem symbolize? Let's have a look. The layout and positioning of these gates can be seen in the picture below.

Jerusalem's Walls & Gates In the days of Nehemiah (Nehemiah Chapter 3)



The spiritual meaning of the gates of Jerusalem

As mentioned, the gates of Jerusalem have both a personal and prophetic meaning and I'll add comments on both for each gate below.

Sheep Gate - Neh 3:1,32

The very first gate mentioned is the sheep gate. It was called the sheep gate because this was the gate which the sheep and lambs used in the sacrifice were bought through.

- *Personal aspect:* No prizes for knowing that this speaks of the very first experience we come into in our Christian life – that is, a realisation that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. The sheep gate then speaks to us of the cross and the sacrifice that was made for our sins. It is the starting point of everything but you will also notice if you read the entire chapter that the sheep gate is also mentioned at the very end once we have come full circle. That is because everything starts and ends with Jesus' death on the cross.
- *Prophetic aspect:* This gate points to the first coming of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (**John 1:29**). He is the sacrifice foretold in this sheep gate. He is the door by which everyone must enter to be saved (**John 10:7-9**).

Fish Gate - Neh 3:3

The Fish gate was mentioned next. It was called the fish gate because the fisherman of Galilee would bring their catch in through this gate to be sold.

- *Personal aspect:* For us, it speaks of evangelism as we have been called to be 'fishers of men' (**Matt 4:19**). It is a natural progression in our Christian life that after seeing that Jesus died for our sins, we would then want to tell others about it. Surveys have shown that believers who have been saved less than two years win the most people to the Lord. Their simple testimony of what Jesus has done in their lives qualifies them to be great 'fishers of men.' So this is the next step in the Christian life.
- *Prophetic aspect:* This gate speaks of the church in the first century (the apostolic era) where believers on fire for God sacrificed all and went out to turn the world upside down with the message of Jesus Christ! And that is what happened. Starting with the Jews and then travelling out to the Gentiles in the then known world, the Apostles and disciples of the Lord truly were 'fishers of men' and the growth of Christianity spread rapidly during the first century.

Old Gate - Neh 3:6

Following from the Fish gate was the Old gate. Nehemiah is the only book in the Bible where it is called the Old gate and it may have been one of the original gates made.

- *Personal aspect:* This speaks to us of the old ways of truth. A young Christian having experienced the sheep gate, then the fish gate, soon sees the need for experiencing the old gate. This means learning the old ways of truth that never change. **Jeremiah 6:16** states 'Thus says the Lord, Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls.' Too many Christian's today want something new. The latest teaching, the latest experience... Or they try to change truth to make it acceptable with what the world thinks is right 'today' (which may not be the same as what it thinks 'tomorrow'.) But the Ancient of Days calls us back to His long established ways that do not change and remain the same yesterday, today and forever.
- *Prophetic aspect:* Prophetically this speaks of the period of the Church Fathers around 100-325 AD (sometimes known as the Ante-Nicene era). This was a period where a defense of the faith and the truth of God were further established to counter attacks and persecution from unbelievers.

Valley Gate - Neh 3:13

Several valleys surround Jerusalem and this gate apparently opened out to the valley of Hinnom.

- *Personal aspect:* Examining the picture above you notice that there is a long distance before you come to the next gate, which is the valley gate. For a new Christian the Lord allows a 'honeymoon' type period where He teaches you and His presence is strong in your life. This can go on for some time as indicated by the positioning of the old and valley gates. But sooner or later the valley gate must come. The valley gate speaks to us of humbling and trials - valley type experiences used by the Lord for our personal growth. Never easy but the Christian needs to remember that in the natural nothing really grows on the mountain tops, but it certainly does down in the valleys. So it is in the spiritual. Never a nice experience but it always produces fruit.
- *Prophetic aspect:* In the history of the church the valley gate would speak of the humbling and suppression of the true church following on from when 'Christianity' was made a state religion under Constantine (~390AD). Pagan rituals were adapted and brought into the 'church' and spiritual regression ensued. This long period continued with the 'dark ages' and the further establishment of Roman Catholicism as the face of 'Christianity' to the world.

Dung (Refuse) Gate - Neh 3:14

All of Jerusalem's refuse and rubbish was taken out through the dung gate, down to the valley of Hinnom, where it would be burned.

- *Personal aspect:* Again there is quite a distance to the next gate indicating that, unfortunately, the valley experience can carry on for some time. But the result of that experience is clearly seen in this next gate - the dung gate. This is where the rubbish is removed and this is what happens in our own life. Valley experiences are used by the Lord to clear away the rubbish so that true faith, refined by the fire, can come forth and produce fruit. Clearing away the rubbish in our lives is never easy but the benefits of this experience can be seen in the next gate. You will notice also that at this point of your Christian life there is a dramatic 'turning of the corner' that takes place. From the diagram above, up until this point we have been moving downward and the experiences have been hard, but having come to this point there is a sharp turn in the road and we begin to move upward again.
- *Prophetic aspect:* The dung gate speaks of the rubbish that became established within the 'church' during the dark and medieval ages leading up to the reformation. Some of doctrinal 'rubbish' that needed removing included the teachings of indulgences, purgatory, salvation by various sacraments and works, exaltation of Mary as the 'Mother of God' and the man-made church hierarchy and papal authority. There was a lot to be removed!

Fountain Gate - Neh 3:15

The fountain gate is located near the pool of Siloah and was often used by the people for cleaning before proceeding on to the temple.

- *Personal aspect:* You will notice from the picture that the fountain gate is located extremely close to the dung gate. In other words, after a valley type experience where rubbish in our lives is cleared out through the dung gate, true faith comes forth and the fountains begin to flow quite quickly! This speaks to us of the living waters of the Holy Spirit that cleanse our lives and empower us for our Christian life. Jesus said: 'Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' (**John 7:38**)
- *Prophetic aspect:* In church history, this speaks of the period beginning with the reformation (1517-1600). It was a time when the truth of God's word was established again as Bibles were printed for the common man to read and the key truth of salvation by grace through faith opened the fountains of salvation to flow again.

Water Gate - Neh 3:26

The Water Gate led down to the Gihon Spring which was located adjacent to the Kidron Valley

- *Personal aspect:* The next gate we arrive at is the water gate. The water gate is a picture of the word of God and its effect in our life. **Eph 5:26** states '... having washed her by the water of the word.' **Psalms 119:9** states that it is only through God's word that we can be clean. It is no coincidence that this gate was located next to the fountain gate as the two often go together. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes the word of God alive to us personally, allowing cleansing, encouragement and direction to take place in our life.
- *Prophetic aspect:* From 1600-1900 the word of God made a dramatic impact in the lives of many around the world. Some of the great men of God preached the word including John Bunyan in the time of the Puritans, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, D.L Moody among others. The preaching and cleansing of the word went forth into countries and continents previously starved of the word through men such as Hudson Taylor, Adoraim Judson and William Carey.

Horse Gate - Neh 3:28

The horse gate was close to the King's stables and the men of Jerusalem would ride their horses out of this gate to war.

- *Personal aspect:* The horse gate speaks to us of warfare as horses were used in battle and became a symbol of war. **Revelation 19:11** 'I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness does He judge and make war.' Spiritual warfare, as we will see in this entire study on Nehemiah, is a requirement of every Christian because we are all in a battle whether we know it or not. It is also interesting that the horse gate follows the water (word) gate for as the word goes forth the spiritual warfare is sure to increase!
- *Prophetic aspect:* Horses speak of speed and war. From the 1900's onwards both of these certainly apply! The speed of medical, technological, industrial and scientific advancements was beyond comparison. And yet with it came two world wars, countless wars between nations and constant ethnic unrest. For the church it has been one battle after another with the rise of the cults, Biblical criticism. Modernism and liberalism leading to an increasing apostasy within

the church. The ultimate fulfilment prophetically of the horse gate will be in the Tribulation – the Day of the Lord as described in Revelation 6-19.

East Gate – Neh 3:29

The East gate is located on the opposite side of the Mount of Olives.

- *Personal aspect:* **Ezekiel 44:1-3** '... the gate that looked toward the east, and it was shut. The Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered by it.' The east gate opens and looks toward the Mount of Olives and we know that when Jesus returns He will return to this mount. (**Zech 14:4**). He will then enter Jerusalem by the east gate. The east gate then speaks of the return of Jesus Christ. For our Christian life it shows us of our need to live with this hope and to long for His return. A specific crown is even given to those who do this (**2 Tim 4:8**).
- *Prophetic aspect:* Please take note how the last three gates (Horse, East and Inspection gate) in the picture are very close together because so are the events which they symbolise. Prophetically the east gate is very close to the horse gate because the day of God's wrath ends with the coming of the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem on earth. (See Zech chapter 14).

Inspection Gate – Neh 3:31

Also known as the Miphkad gate. The word in Hebrew has a military connection and according to tradition it was at this gate that David would meet his troops to inspect them.

- *Personal aspect:* The final gate is the inspection gate. This gate speaks to us of the examination of our lives by the Lord. This occurs in this life as indicated by Paul in **1 Cor 4:4**: 'For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.' The ultimate fulfilment is at the Bema seat of Christ (as spoken of in **1 Cor 3:10-15**, **2 Cor 5:10**) where our lives are inspected and rewarded appropriately. In our Christian experience we should be living with this in mind. We are called to live our lives with eternity in view, caring more for the things of eternity than the temporal that we see around us.
- *Prophetic aspect:* Following the return of the Lord there is a judgement of the nations that will occur as well. This is recorded in the sheep and the goats judgement in Mathew 25:31-46. From here he will separate all the people who survived the tribulation into those that can enter into His kingdom on earth (sheep) and those that are to go into everlasting destruction (the goats). And then the Lion of Judah shall reign in His Messianic Kingdom!

The lives and attitudes of the workers.

There are a few more important points that can come out of a chapter like this, which should be stated. So far we have looked at the gates and their spiritual meaning, but there are other points from the lives of the workers that we can learn from.

Team Effort

Reading through the chapter one of the first things that we see is that the whole process was a team effort. If the walls and gates were going to be rebuilt then everyone would have to play their part. Now this is but a picture of how the church is meant to operate. No, the pastor is not meant to be a one man band that does everything while the others rest and sit in their padded pews. We all have different giftings but it is for the edification of all.

Eph 4:11-13 'And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.'

You will notice that the giftings that people have are for the equipping of the saints in their works of service. This is what we learn from Nehemiah. Some may have been gifted in particular areas and they were to work in those areas, but all helped in whatever way they could.

Everyone had something to offer

'And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.'

Maybe you are unsure of your gifting and what God is calling you to do with your life. Maybe you don't think you have anything to offer. If that is you then remember Hananiah! You see, he was a perfumer by trade and yet he was still willing to get in there, get his hands dirty and help do his part by repairing part of the wall. Now if a perfumer can build a wall then you also can help in some way in the building of the church!

Rebuilding often began at home

Vs 10,23,30 'Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house... After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house... After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters.'

One of the things this chapter reveals is that often the workers began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem outside their own home first. They did think of others and knew that collectively they would contribute to the wall as a whole; yet individually they still wanted to make sure their own home had a solid wall of protection surrounding it. The principle for us is to make sure we have taken care of our lives at home first before we are used to help others. We have to make sure that we are not different people in and outside of church, nor are we any different when we are at home alone when no-one can see us. One of the things that Jesus hated the most was the play-acting of the Pharisees. They liked to be seen as 'spiritual' among the people while in reality they were actually white washed tombs Jesus said. Let us all mimic Nehemiah's men and make sure that our home life is taken care of first before any ministering or service to others is undertaken.

The work was voluntary

Yep! No one got paid or were even coerced into rebuilding the walls. They all volunteered knowing that the glory of God's name was at stake. And what's more they didn't expect to be rewarded for their work! I heard Charles Swindol speak on the radio recently and he mentioned that 'one of the biggest areas of discouragement comes when Christians think that they get their rewards in this life.' I would have to agree with that. We should check our motives in the work that we do to ensure we are not doing it to receive temporal rewards here and now. We should all live with eternity in view. This brings me to the last but very encouraging point.

God is a recorder of names

What else can we get when we read a chapter such as this? Well, we can be encouraged that God takes the time to record names. He's a recorder! The Bible doesn't just say 'and lots of people made repairs to the wall.' No, it specifically names each person that made repairs and that has been recorded for all of eternity! I love the verse in Malachi that says

'Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. 'And they will be Mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.' **Mal 3:16,17**

Our lives and actions are recorded by the Lord for our rewards in the life to come. Nothing is done for the Lord in vain on this earth, even if no one else sees it. So don't lose heart in your work for the Lord knowing that 'God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.'

Nehemiah Chapter 4:1-6 Sanballat's Initial Attack: Confuse that mind

Neh 4:1-6 Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. And he spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy *men* of Samaria and said, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore *it* for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?' Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* near him and he said, 'Even what they are building - if a fox should jump on *it*, he would break their stone wall down!' Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before Thee, for they have demoralized the builders. So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its *height*, for the people had a mind to work.

So far we have seen the attitude needed to become a Christian and the action needed to be the Christian you've just become. Nehemiah four however, presents us with a new obstacle; one that every true Christian will face. For we read in chapter 4:1 "Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews." For a man whose name means "a secret hatred", Sanballat (Satan) didn't keep much hidden this time did he?⁶ In fact he was furious and openly said so. This is the nature of Satan.

Satan's Nature

So, what does the bible tell us about him? He is spoken of in seven OT books and by every NT writer.

- **NAMES:** Satan (adversary), Devil (slanderer), Lucifer (son of the morning), Beelzebub (Lord of the flies)
- **TITLES:** Evil One (**1John 5:19**), Tempter (**1Thess3:5**), Prince of this world (**John 12:31**), God of this age (**2Cor 4:4**) Accuser of the brethren (**Rev 12:10**)
- **REPRESENTATIONS:** Serpent (Cunning, wise, **Rev 12:9**), Dragon (Powerful, **Rev 12:3**), Angel of Light (Deception, **2Cor 11:14**), Lion (Devourer, **1Pet5:8**)
- **NATURE:** He is - A Spirit Being (**Eph 6:11-12**), The highest of all angelic creatures (**Ezek 28:12**), A murderer (**John 8:44**), A liar (**John 8:44**), A Confirmed Sinner (**1John 3:8**), An accuser (**Rev 12:10**), An adversary (**1Pet 5:8**)

His hatred is against all mankind, but for the unsaved it is so well hidden that most do not even believe that he exists. Blinded to the fact that they are caught captive, bound by the power of the evil one (**1John 5:19**), they refuse to become Christians because they don't want to lose their so-called freedom! This all changes once the wall starts going up. If there is one thing that gets up Sanballat's nose⁷. its people who begin to build the walls of salvation, restoring glory to its rightful owner - God!

The First Attack - the Mind!

This first attack then, is one that is common to all Christians throughout their life, but is especially common for the one just saved - an attack in the mind! The Apostle Paul, fully aware of Satan's ways, wrote "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly... We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (**2Cor 10:3-5**). "And take the helmet of salvation." (**Eph 6:17**) Both of these passages are concerned with spiritual warfare and both show us the constant need to protect and renew the mind. We see in **Nehemiah 4:1-6** that the enemy used fear, depression, mockery and doubts to demoralise the builders. Ask anyone contemplating building the walls of salvation in their life. Satan's first role is nearly always to get in quick and through confusion, doubt, and fear, snatch the word of life before it can be firmly rooted. (**Matt 13:4,19**) Nothing changes! If he can capture our minds, he captures our emotions, and if captures our emotions he captures our will, and if he captures our will, he captures our actions. Moral of the story - go into the mountains, be a hermit, smash the TV and live off locusts, never seeing a living soul. Well, not quite but protect that mind!



Of course, all Christians are attacked in this way throughout their life. In fact, a quick survey reveals some pretty big names that have fallen to the old mind attack⁸. How often have you felt a compulsion to follow harder after God and all you hear

are the negative thoughts like 'you'll never change', 'God cannot use you', 'you will lose all your friends' etc. What we need to remember is that when Satan lies he is doing what comes perfectly natural to him!⁹ Satan however, is not omnipresent or omnipotent so he doesn't do it alone. We read that a furious Sanballat *"spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, 'what do these feeble Jews think they are doing? Are they going to restore it themselves .Can they revive the rubble even the burned ones?'"* (vs 2). Sanballat was the governor of Samaria and had powerful and wealthy support under his control. Again this is consistent with the bible record for our warfare is *"against the rulers, against the powers,... against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (**Eph 6:12**)

Tobiah The Copy Cat!

Neh 4:3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* near him and he said, 'Even what they are building – if a fox should jump on *it*, he would break their stone wall down!'

If that wasn't enough, Sanballat's mockery seems to have prompted Tobiah to begin his assault (vs3). This should not come as any surprise as *"the flesh (Tobiah) sets its desire against the Spirit (Nehemiah), and the Spirit (Nehemiah) against the flesh (Tobiah). For these are in opposition to each other."* (**Gal 5:17**) So the picture is of Satan and the sinful nature joining forces to demoralise the Christian. And this is often how it works in reality. The fears and doubts from Satan are often enlarged and dwelt upon by a nature within us, given to fear, doubt and unbelief. What Sanballat started, Tobiah carried on with. It is usually the way. The two can work separately or together and it's not always easy to know what source the attack is from. Romans chapter 8 speaks of the result of listening to old Tobiah. In **Romans 8:6** we read 'For the mind set on the flesh (Tobiah) is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.' So what are you facing at the moment? What fears or doubts do you have? Have you been renewing your mind with the truth, which the Spirit speaks through the word of God, or have old Sanballat and Tobiah tricked you?

Renewing Your Mind Works!

Neh 4:4 'Hear, O our God, how we are despised! ... Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before you, for they have demoralized the builders.' So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its *height*, for the people had a mind to work.'

Well, we'll look at Tobiah in more depth later on, but for now, rest assured that the enemy can be resisted as Nehemiah shows us. For after prayer, we read that

*"we built the wall and the whole wall was joined to half its height, for the people **had a mind to work.**"* Isn't that great? The enemy can be resisted and the work of building a strong salvation can be achieved but it comes from renewing your mind with the truth. Isn't this one of the hardest and longest lessons that we need to learn? Just when we think that we have learned how to bring the Lord into our situations, a different situation arises and suddenly we find ourselves acting like we are totally alone, not even knowing the Lord! But we shouldn't be conformed to those in the world and how they operate but we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds as **Romans 12:2** states.

That closes this first attack but it's certainly not the last they will face. With the mockery and fear tactics not working, a more confrontational approach now seemed the order of the day!



Nehemiah 4:7-15 Sanballat's Second Attack: Physical Persecution

Neh 4:7-11 Now it came about when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, *and* that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. And all of them conspired together to come *and* fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night. Thus in Judah it was said, 'The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.' And our enemies said, 'They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them, and put a stop to the work.'



In the last verse of the previous section, we read that the wall was now built to half its height and the old saying "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me", was coming true for the first time ever. Nehemiah and his builders had survived the initial attack and having a mind to work had completed half the job! The enemy may have resisted but He's not above changing tactics. Phase two was now quickly being devised and it involved the sticks and stones! We read in vs 7-8 "Now it came about when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. All of them conspired to come together and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it." Now this disturbance wasn't just calling Nehemiah names for they said "they will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work." (vs 11) They really, really, didn't like this wall did they? Who knows what they would have done given the opportunity.

So, what does the enemy have the power to do given the opportunity?

Before reading this list, please note that the redeemed have been bought and paid for by Jesus' blood. God owns them. In the instances used below where Satan persecutes God's people, GOD HAS ALLOWED THIS TO HAPPEN. God, not Satan, is omniscient, omnipresent, & omnipotent. While we can't fully understand how the relationship between God and Satan operates, we do know that the Lord is sovereign and in control. The best insight into the power of Satan is in **Job 1:12-2:7** where God said "Behold, all that he has is IN YOUR POWER."

- The Sabeans & Chaldeans: power over people to do his bidding. (vs 15,17)
- Fire/Lightning: power to cause storms and lightning (vs 15)
- Tornadoes/Hurricane: power to use tornadoes and nature to cause havoc. (vs 19)
- Sores & Sickness: power to cause sickness in & upon our bodies (ch 2:7)

Other examples are found of course backing up these examples and providing new ones:

- Animals: He can cause animals to act under his influence (**Luke 8:32-33**)
- Thoughts: What we think are our own thoughts can be from him! (**Matt 16:21-23**)
- Physical Deformity: His power can cause deformity in our appearance (**Luke 13:11**)

Again, keep in mind that God is sovereign. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Now in Nehemiah, the first thing to note is that none of the enemies are absent from this physical attack. While Sanballat is again at the front of the list, Tobiah and Geshem's people the Arabs are also mentioned. Sanballat is again the main orchestrator but he rarely seems to work alone. A brief look at the history of the Church shows us that Satan has used both of his friends in destroying and persecuting God's people. In the first and second centuries the attack came from the Roman Empire, who frequently forced Christians to do lunch with lions. This is Satan using the world and its system (Geshem) to do what he ultimately wants. To "kill them and put a stop to the work." (vs 11) The Roman Empire became the Roman Catholic Church (Tobiah - that very "good" religious system who may say that Jehovah is good, but hates God's true people) and the persecution and deaths continued.



Old Pope and Pagan!

John Bunyan, in his classic 'Pilgrim's Progress' writes: 'And I saw in a dream that at the end of this valley lay blood, bones, ashes, and mangled bodies of pilgrims who had gone this way before; and while I was wondering about the reason for this, I saw a little ways in front of me a cave, where two giants, Pope and Pagan, had lived... But Christian passed this place without much danger, which I wondered about; I have learned since that Pagan has been dead for some time, and the other, though still alive, has grown so crazy and stiff in his joints because of his age and the many skirmishes he met with in his younger days that he can now do little more than sit in the mouth of his cave, grinning at pilgrims as they go by and biting his nails because he cannot attack them...Yet at the sight of the old man who sat in the mouth of the cave, he did not know what to think, especially since the man spoke to him saying "You will never change till more of you are burned."

Will the last days see a revival of the Roman Empire and a new lease of life for old Pope?

While in the west, we don't live in a country where physical persecution happens to anything like this extent, physical attacks and trials still come our way and are used by Satan to weaken our desire for God and the Christian life. In fact, it is the promise of God that *"In this world you will have trouble"*. There, it's a promise! But our response to these trials is what God is looking for, and our faith is what He wants to refine.

The Resistance Of The Righteous

Neh 4:12-15 'And it came about when the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, 'They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,' then I stationed *men* in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears, and bows. When I saw *their fear*, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people: 'Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.' And it happened when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.'

So what was Nehemiah's response? We read in vs 9 earlier, *"But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night."* The response gives the necessary ingredients for God to act.¹⁰ It is, as Major Ian Thomas says, "a love for God, leading to dependence upon God, resulting in obedience to God, that lets God be God in a man!" Nehemiah wasn't complacent, or under-estimating the enemy for he *"stationed men in the lowest part of the space, behind the wall, the exposed places, and stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows."* (vs 13) Yet his prayer and attitude was always that *"The God of heaven shall give us success; therefore we his servants will arise and build but you (the enemy) have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."* (chapter 2:20)

When the enemy attacks there are always areas of our life that could be called *"the exposed places."* The wall has not yet been built in this area and we are still vulnerable to an attack. Sanballat isn't stupid; he goes for their weakness!¹¹ This may be a personality problem like pride, greed or being given to worry or depression. It may be a habit or addiction that he can use. Doesn't matter what it is - guard the lower parts and exposed places. Be on the alert and use the armour of God (this is covered in the next study). Fear is often a favourite of the enemy as it was in Nehemiah's day¹². It affected nearly all the workers and leaders during this physical attack (vs 14) yet the answer remains the same - *"Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight..."* Does that sound familiar? It should, for it is the same attitude that Joshua and Caleb were trying to instil in Israel to enter the Promised Land. Of course, they were met with a slightly less favourable response and were nearly stoned! (**Num 14:9-10**)

Now what was the result of Nehemiah's faith? Vs 15 tells us that *"God frustrated their plan"*. Nehemiah's action allowed God to operate and receive the glory!

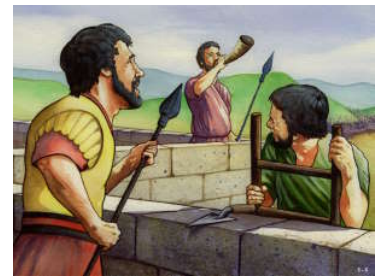
So the work on the wall continued, providing greater protection and security each day.

And may the walls of your salvation continue to build as well, thwarting the enemy's attack!

Nehemiah Chapter 4:16-23 Our Stand – The Armour of God

Neh 4:16-17 'And it came about from that day on, that half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows, and the breastplates; and the captains *were* behind the whole house of Judah. Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took *their* load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.'

Obviously, having seen off the first two attacks, the enemy gave up, all of Nehemiah's problems went away and everyone lived happily ever after. Right? Well, not quite. For we read that *"it came about from that day on, that half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates... Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon."* (vs 16-17). They were beginning to learn the nature of the enemy and the need to constantly be alert, prepared and watchful. We can learn a couple of things from the passage above.



Everybody Build Now

Firstly, that everyone within the walls was vulnerable to the enemy's attack and therefore all of them needed to be able to fight when the time arose. And secondly, their priority was not in attacking the enemy, but in continuing to rebuild the walls. Rebuilding the walls was a victory in itself and would render the enemies activity useless. When we come to our Christian lives, the principles are exactly the same. Spiritual warfare is not just for some elite commando group within Christianity, but for all - simply because all are open to attack. Writing to the 'Saints who are at Ephesus', Paul wrote, *"Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the powers... against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (**Eph 6:10-12**) For Paul, and for Nehemiah, everyone is involved in this fight whether they want to (or know it) or not. Therefore, be ready. Nobody would rush into a battle and then try to put their armour on! Not a good plan. No, Nehemiah ensured that they all had their armour and weapons ready before the attack came. The Apostle Paul would have got on well with this man!

The Armour of God

Of course it the same with the armour of God. It should be on BEFORE the time arises. So what is it? Well, here was Paul, chained up & guarded by Roman soldiers... and staring at them day and night he starts writing....

- **Gird your loins with the belt of truth** - The belt on the Roman Soldiers was the most important piece because nearly all of the other armour was fastened onto it. It held everything together and in place. This is how important truth is. If your faith is based on error, then your armour will fall off! All of the armour is related to truth. The truth of the gospel sets us free!
- **Put on the breastplate of righteousness** - This guarded the heart. The righteousness that defeats the enemy is the righteousness of God, given as a gift to the believer. Satan cannot answer the work of God and all his accusations and condemnation is totally repelled by the believer who knows that thru Jesus' righteousness he is spotless and without fault.
- **Shod your feet with the gospel of peace** - The shoes were for grip and secure footing in the battle. The gospel of peace is that through Jesus' work we have peace and free access to God. This peace and rest gives us the assurance and stability needed for the fight. Not wavering in our salvation but standing firm, sure that our salvation is secure in God.
- **Taking up the shield of faith** - The shield guards us from the enemies assault. It is faith that does this. Not faith in faith, but faith in the faithfulness of God! **Psalm 91:2** 'His faithfulness is a shield'. **Gen 15:2** 'Do not fear. I am a shield to you'. It is a faith that continues to believe despite our feelings or circumstances.
- **Take the helmet of salvation** - Protect the head cause you don't want to lose that! Guards our mind. **1 Thess 5:8** 'put on... as a helmet, the hope of salvation.' This is salvation in its fullest sense. This is the hope (confident assurance) that in whatever situation we find ourselves in, God can and will bring us through safely. This guards the mind!
- **The sword of the Spirit** - Our only attacking weapon. It's the word of God. The enemy cannot counter the truth of Gods word. This is of course what Jesus used when he was tempted by the Devil. The word of God is 'living and active,

sharper than any two edged sword.' Again, truth is important here as even the enemy will use scripture out of context when need be.

Carry on building... but be prepared!

Neh 4:18-21 'As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. And I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. 'At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.' So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.'

The second point to note is that while they carried their weapons by their side, the focus was the work at hand - rebuilding the walls of salvation. If the walls and gates went up, it would provide security for the people of God as well as an entrance way for new people to come into his presence. Through it the kingdom of God would increase on earth and the enemy would be defeated all the more. In talking about spiritual warfare, it seems to me that the Apostle Paul gives the same emphasis. The key words in Ephesians on spiritual warfare are 'stand' and 'resist'. He wrote, *"Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore..."* (**Eph 6:13**) And in the same passage as the armour of God, Paul writes *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit..., and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel."* (**Eph 6:18-19**) In other words - do what Nehemiah did. Be alert and watchful with your spiritual weapons ready, but keep on with the work at hand - pray and preach the gospel so that the walls of salvation may increase.

The next few verses in Nehemiah also tell us that spiritual warfare is not an individual's job. When one part of the body hurts the whole body is affected. When one part of the body is attacked with trials and hardships then the rest of the body should help out. Nehemiah put it like this - *"The work is great and expansive, and we are separated from one another. At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there."* (ch 5:19-20) Paul said it like this, *"be on the alert with all perseverance and pray for all the saints."* (**Eph 6:18**) Both of these quotes are in the context of our warfare. Apart from Paul Simon, no man is a rock and no man is an island. Prayer and help for the one in need are required.

Team Work needed!

Neh 4:22-23 'At that time I also said to the people, 'Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.' So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.'

Again I want to point out that for Nehemiah to win this battle it had to be a joint effort. Each person needed to spend time in Jerusalem, to be a guard by night and a worker to build by day. Nehemiah alone couldn't do it. While we all have an individual walk with the Lord, we all form one family of God and it is that family which stands against the enemy when one member is being attacked. Notice also that the Christian life involves both guarding and building. We need to guard against false teachers and their influence on our Christian brothers and sisters, and we also need to build others up with the truth so that they will not be so susceptible to the enemy in the future.



The Word guards and attacks!

It is interesting that the word of God is given both to guard and build.

'All scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.' (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

In other words, two out of the four reasons the word is given is for correcting and guarding against wrong teaching. And two out of four are given for building and training in the correct way. Some see correction as negative, but it is all necessary and positive, just like in Nehemiah's day where both were necessary.

So with this kind of attitude, Nehemiah was able to be victorious over Sanballat's second attack. If you were the enemy, it's time to change the tactics don't you think? It seems that trials and physical attacks can actually increase a wall builder's resolve and faith! But there is a man, an old man, who very rarely fails...

Enter Geshem!

Nehemiah 6:1-9 The Trump Card: Geshem and Worldly Compromise

Neh 6:1-2 Now it came about when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab, and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates, that Sanballat and Geshem sent *a message* to me, saying, 'Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono.' But they were planning to harm me.

After a bit of in-house fighting and general dummy spitting (Ch 5), we see the next attack come in Nehemiah chapter 6. But by now the scenario is slightly different. Lets just pause for a moment and look at the stages of the attacks so far:

1. Firstly, when the work on the wall began, the opposition came mainly through a mind attack using fear and mockery. This is the Christian beginning his new life. Its Satan's first up effort to prevent growth.
2. When the wall was half its height (ch 4:6) the tactics changed. The Christian was older and had better defenses. Mind games may have slowed him a bit, but once the helmet of salvation went on, that attack didn't have its intended effect anymore.
3. A physical attack was now called for. Again the armour of God came to his rescue and work on the walls progressed.

Now in chapter 6 we read that Nehemiah had *"rebuilt the wall, and no breach remained in it, although at this time he had not set up the doors in the gates."* (vs1). Here we have it; first no walls, then half its height, and now the wall fully completed.

No more at the mercy of the enemies attacks!¹³ The picture is of a mature believer in Christ who has learned to stand strong in the Lord. So what could penetrate such strong walls? What attack could Satan try now? Actually, Jesus gives us the answer as to what happens at this stage of a believer's life.

Parallels - Parable of the Sower and Nehemiah's walls

Now look at how the enemy's tactics seldom change! Jesus was speaking to his disciples and he told them a parable about the sower sowing seed.

Mat 13:3-9 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4) As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (6) But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (9) He who has ears, let him hear."

Now for the lazy and semi-illiterate look at the table below to see the parallels between these attacks of the enemy and what we see in the book of Nehemiah:

Seed Fell On	Trouble	Interpretation	Time of Growth	Stage of Wall
1. Road	Birds	Snatched from the mind	None	No wall - Sanballat attacks the mind (Satan)
2. Rocky Places	Sun	Persecution	Short - Grew Quickly	Half Height - Persecution (Satan)
3. Thorns	Choked by Thorns	Worldiness	Long - Mixed Soil	Full, No Gates - Geshem (world) tries to lure them out
4. Good Soil	None	Great Growth!	Long - Good Soil	Completed - Safe from their enemies

From the parable we see three stages to stop the seed from growing:

1. Satan tries to snatch the word from the mind before it can begin to grow. (No wall, mind games - **Neh 4:1-6**)
2. If the seed does grow, begin operation trials and persecutions (Wall going up, physical persecutions start **Neh 4:7-15**)
3. For the strong seed, that has had time to grow, choke with worldiness (Full Wall, enter Geshem's call of compromise! **Neh 6:1-9**)

4. But the seed in good soil produces a strong plant bearing much fruit. (Completed wall, strong salvation, enemies defeated!)

So where have we got to in this study? We are at point 3. Satan changes tactics and tries to choke our spiritual life by the "deceitfulness of wealth."

Enter Geshem!

Neh 6:2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono." But they were scheming to harm me;

On hearing that the wall itself had been completed, Sanballat, Geshem and Tobiah rejoiced at such a wonderful accomplishment! Argh, not exactly. They weren't happy. Not even a smidgen. We read *"Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying 'Come, let us meet together in the plain of Ono.' But they were planning to harm me."* So what tactics were employed when the walls of salvation were fully completed? Well, if they can't get in, they'll try get Nehemiah out! So they try lure him out from behind his secure walls, setting up a meeting with Geshem (the world) in the plain of Ono. The word 'Ono' actually means 'his strength' and is a derivative from the word 'one' meaning 'ability, power or wealth'. To me that's quite a picture! At a time when the walls are completely rebuilt, Sanballat's (Satan's) tactic is to use Geshem (the world) to draw the mature believers out of their strong salvation, into the place of 'his strength'. And his strength is in regard to his 'ability, power and wealth'¹⁴. No wonder Jesus warned that even a grown seed could become choked by the *'worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth.'* (**Matt 13:22**). It doesn't happen overnight once a believer has matured to this stage of his walk, but it is a slow and subtle choking that occurs. Beware the choking from the deceitfulness of wealth and the cares of this life!



Now apart from Geshem, I think if you actually went to Ono you would probably find the remains of several once-famous televangelists and a few still alive who just enjoy living there. Ability, power and wealth seems pretty attractive¹⁵ but we should always remember that behind it all, *'they were planning to harm me.'* (vs2)

Nehemiah's Response: It's a great work!

Neh 6:3-4 'So I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?' And they sent *messages* to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way.'

Verse 3 of chapter 6, gives I believe, the answer to combating the temptations and pull of the world. I will leave this at the moment, as it is also our defence from the next attack of Geshem. But here is the clue for now... Nehemiah responds to their request with 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down'. Hmm - what is the great work? More on that in the next study.

It does need to be added that Geshem's attempts, with Sanballat of course lurking in the background, were quite constant and carried on even after Nehemiah's initial declaration that he would not go down to Ono. In fact in verse 4 we read that *"they sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way."* Geshem doesn't give up easily and I'm sure Sanballat will keep using him as he has been so successful in the past.¹⁶

The Return of Geshem: Be afraid, be very afraid! (Ch 6:5-9)

Neh 6:5-8 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, 'It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports. 'And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'A king is in Judah!' And now it will be reported to the king according to these reports. So come now, let us take counsel together.'

With Sanballat and Geshem's plans for lunch at Ono looking less and less likely, a new plot was now hatched between the dynamic duo. If you can't get the Christian interested in wealth, prosperity and worldly power, how about a bit of slander among the nations to keep him unproductive in the work of God? We read *"then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, 'It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their King...Come*

now let us take counsel together.' (vs5-7) Geshem seems to only have two useful tricks; if he can't get you to compromise with the world he will at least get you scared of what they are thinking and saying about you! In other words, Geshem's second attack is the fear of man!¹⁷ The picture and types stand true again. Sanballat's servant brings the report of Geshem spreading rumours among the nations. This is Satan using his power over the people in the world to paralyse the Christian's life and witness¹⁸. In fact, while the fear of man is a huge ploy of the enemy, slander to this extent seems quite an elite group to break into.

Who was slandered by the enemy?

- Well, there was King David who gives us a good insight into how it feels in Psalm 31.
- Stephen the first martyr was convicted because of a false report (**Acts 6:8-15**),
- Paul and the other Apostles were all slandered in this way (**Acts 16:20-21, 17:7**)
- And of course, the Lord Jesus was tried and crucified on the evidence of false reports. Not to mention his earlier ministry when he was called Beelzebub. We read concerning his trial "Now the chief priests and the whole council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put him to death... For many were giving false testimony about him, but they were not consistent..."
- And I guess we cannot forget Faithful. Who? You know, good old Faithful from Pilgrims Progress, who had to stand before Judge Hate-good in Vanity Fair. Three witnesses, Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank all lied on oath saying that *"this man, regardless of his name, is one of the vilest men in our country. He does not respect prince or people, law or custom..."* Sound familiar??? *"...Then the jury, whose names were Mr Blind-man, Mr No-good, Mr Malice, Mr Love-lust, Mr Live-loose, Mr Heady, Mr High-mind, Mr Enmity, Mr Liar, Mr Cruelty, Mr Hate-light and Mr Implacable went out to deliberate... and they unanimously found him guilty."*

Nehemiah was however able to recognise these tactics and in verse 9 we read, *"For all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking, 'they will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done.' But now O God, strengthen my hands."* No wonder the bible says that 'the fear of man brings a snare, but those who trust in the Lord will be kept safe.' Geshem's rumours among the nations were designed to frighten Nehemiah's men. The intended result was to paralyse the workers through fear. Truly the fear of man is a snare. It can paralyse, making us totally inactive for Gods kingdom. What's sad is that a lot of the time when we're scared of what people are thinking, they aren't! (Thinking that is!) But the fear grips us the same none the less. But those that trust in the Lord will be kept safe.

What can we learn from Nehemiah here?

Neh 6:8-9 'Then I sent *a message* to him saying, 'Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind.' For all of them were *trying* to frighten us, thinking, 'They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done.' But now, *O God*, strengthen my hands.'

Nehemiah's response as always was in faith and determination saying *'But now O God, strengthen my hands.'* In other words, turn my fear to faith, and my doubt to determination!

He would not let slander or the fear of man stand in his way.

Nor would he buckle to worldly compromise but in lifting all things to the throne of God, found strength and determination to run the race to the very end.

May we all learn from Nehemiah in these important lessons!

Nehemiah 6:2–3 Our Defense: Recognising the great work

Neh 6:2–3 Sanballat and Geshem sent *a message* to me, saying, 'Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono.' But they were planning to harm me. So I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?'

We have seen in the previous studies that Satan can use the world in two ways:

1. Firstly, through luring us out into a state of compromise.
2. And secondly, through making us fearful of what they think of us.



We will now look a bit more closely at what I believe is the answer to combating these problems. And it is found in Nehemiah's first response when faced with Geshem's subtle attack. Every time Geshem sent a message to Nehemiah he responded with *'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you.'* (Ch 6:3) He recognised the great work! So, question time – what makes something a great work? Is it how big something is? Or how much money goes into it? I don't think so. I believe that the two main ingredients for a great work are: 1) How long it will last. 2) Who it is done for. What I mean is this:

Consider Eternity!

As Christians, our defense against the call of the world is to recognise the great work that we are called to. The work we do is great for it lasts for eternity!¹⁹ Through our testimony and life, people can be 'snatched from the fire' (**Jude 23**) and saved for eternity. The only time that worldliness can start to take a grip on our lives is when we have lost sight of why we are here and the fact that we are 'only visiting this planet'.

Only Visiting This Planet

When is the last time you considered yourself a stranger, pilgrim or exile on this earth? That's what the old men of faith considered themselves. In Hebrews 11 we have the Hall of Faith. The greatest men the earth has ever known. They are those that God says 'of whom the world was not worthy'. This chapter is about faith and the basis for their faith was their continual gaze into eternity. Look at what is said again and again:

By faith Abraham went out not knowing where he was going **'for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God'** (vs 8–10). 'All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having welcomed them from a distance, **and having confessed that they were strangers, and exiles on earth.'** (vs 13). **But as it is they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has prepared a city for them.** ' (vs 16). Moses chose to endure hardship with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin **for 'he was looking ahead to his reward.'** (vs 26). Others were tortured, not accepting release **so that they might obtain a better resurrection.'** (vs 35)

I don't think there would have been a lot of worldliness in that list! All had their eyes on the things to come.

Nehemiah didn't lose sight of the great work! It is interesting that a lot of the major verses warning against worldliness in the New Testament go on to say something about the second coming or the judgement to come²⁰. If we can recognise that what we are doing is considered a 'great work' then maybe we won't be so quick in going back to 'Ono'. Jesus said something really important that every Christian businessman (or business woman, well actually all of us!) should remember. He said that *'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'* It is the attitude of the world to live only for the now, to build our little empires, caring little for the life to come. But our heart and treasure should not be in this world. Consider the great work! It will last for eternity. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul?



Heaven & Earth – A Dream of Contrasting Fortunes

The importance of eternity was brought home to me again recently through a dream that a friend of mine had. She had been going through various trials and had been quite down when the Lord gave her an incredible dream, showing her (and our) destiny to come. In it she saw herself standing with millions of people and they were talking

about the Lord. She said the place was filled with a peace and beauty she cannot describe. And she saw the Lord Jesus presenting the people back to the Father who was seated on a throne.

The dream carried on and looking down upon the earth, she saw military action and tanks going in every direction upon the earth. Finally she saw people upon the earth, running in fear into forests and woods where hidden camps had been made. Obviously it is the first part of this dream that relates to the topic at hand, but the whole thing shows the reality and awesomeness of our future and the dread for those who will not listen.

Now King David knew of this heavenly hope that guarded his heart and mind. Speaking of the different attitudes between the righteous and the wicked, David wrote:

Psalms 17:13-15 Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword, with Your hand from men, O Lord, from men of the world who have their portion in this life, and whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, and leave the rest of their possession for their babes. But as for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness.

This passage shows the futility of life for those that don't know the Lord. The best they can do is hope for an easy life, storing up possessions to give to their children when they die. Nothing more. Their portion is in this life. But not so us! We like David, fix our eyes on the eternal where we shall see His face in righteousness! And our satisfaction comes when we awake in His likeness!²¹

Consider the King!

The second ingredient for what makes a work great is, quite obviously, the person you're doing the work for. If you're working for your boss then there is a certain level of importance. If you're working for your country then you might put a bit more effort in (hope my boss doesn't read this). If you're working for God Almighty, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who has the power of life and death, um well, yeah, put some effort into it! That work sort of takes priority over the other doesn't it??? So how does this help us? Well, if gazing at eternity could help fend off the lure of the world, surely then gazing into the glory and majesty of God can surely cast off the fear of man. Geshem and the world only seem to attack in these two means. Either they work on getting you to compromise your faith and have one foot in the world, or they scare you into inactivity through the fear of man. We shouldn't let it happen.

What is the Fear of God?

We looked in a previous study at the fear of man. But what is the fear of God? Well it means that we live every moment of our life in a continual state of fear, not ever knowing what God is going to do to us. Ok? Thanks for coming and have a happy afternoon.

Um, er, no. The fear of God is important but thankfully I got the first definition wrong! The fear of the Lord is a reverence for God, leading to honour and trust and putting God first in each situation. Look at how Jesus lived his life on earth; the prophecies said that 'the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord' would rest upon him and 'he would delight in the fear of the Lord.' (**Isa 11:3**) How was that lived out? Was Jesus scared of the Father? No. He gave all glory to the Father, put all situations in the Father's hands, and only said and did what he heard and saw the Father doing! The fear of the Lord led to God in action through the man Jesus Christ!

Are you paralysed by the fear of man? If we were honest, it is a fear that gets each of us at times. It got Abraham (**Gen 12:12, 20:2**) Peter (**Mk 14:66-72**) and many others in Jesus' day (**John 12:42**). Is this you? The Bible tells us to again fear, honour, and remember the Lord.

Verses to remember:

Psalms 118:4-8 "Oh let those who fear the Lord say that his loving kindness is everlasting...The Lord is for me, I will not fear; What can man do to me?"

Isaiah 51:12-13 "Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies...You have forgotten the Lord your Maker who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth."

Heb 13:5-6 "He said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you', so we may confidently say 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"

Proverbs 29:25 "The fear of man brings a snare, but those who trust in the Lord will be kept safe."

I heard a good quote the other day from somewhere... It said, 'If you fear God, you need fear nothing else.' Like that one? Fortunately, Nehemiah had enough reverence and respect for God to carry on with the great work and the attempted compromise, slander and fear tactics didn't put him off. His fear of God overcame the fear of man.

There is a lot that we could learn from Nehemiah!

But Sanballat (Satan) is not through yet. It seems that a change of tactics is in order and that is what we shall look at next!

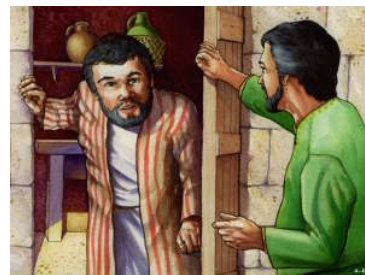
Nehemiah 6:10–14 Sanballat Strikes Back – The angel of light!

Neh 6:10–14 And when I entered the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined at home, he said, 'Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night.' But I said, 'Should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.' Then I perceived that surely God had not sent him, but he uttered *his* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He was hired for this reason that I might become frightened and act accordingly and sin, so that they might have an evil report in order that they could reproach me. Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were *trying* to frighten me.

Very resourceful this Sanballat. You'd sort of think he'd just give up wouldn't you? Why does he bother so much and what else can he try? Well, the answer was not long in coming for we read in vs 10 "When I entered the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, he said 'Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you and they are coming to kill you at night.'" What other tactics can the enemy use when the walls of salvation are rebuilt? If he can't use Geshem to get you out, maybe he can get you from within? Of course, for that to happen he would have to get one of his men in. Hmm... but how could he do that?

Enter the Angel of Light

Neh 6:10 And when I entered the house of Shemaiah... he said, 'Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night... he uttered *his* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.'



This next attack then is the angel of light, and again, the tactics and players used are completely accurate with biblical teaching on this subject. So what do we have so far? Well, having seen off the other attacks, Nehemiah suddenly gets a prophecy to hide in the temple for his enemies are coming to kill him. What would you do? I'm sure Nehemiah didn't want to die but how do you evaluate what's been said? Before we look at his answer, let's first look at the source of this prophecy. We read later on in the chapter that Shemaiah had "uttered *his* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him." (vs 12). Shemaiah was coming under the influence of that dynamic duo, Tobiah and Sanballat – aka the sinful nature and Satan! Two guesses where the New Testament says the source of false prophecies come from!²² So what does the Bible have to say about false teachers and false prophets? Quite a lot actually!

False teachers and false prophets

The Corinthian Church were involved in some horrendous sins like sexual immorality, lawsuits amongst believers, drunk at the Lords supper, divisions and following men instead of the Lord... but Paul still wrote to them and blessed them as Christians (**1Cor.1-9**). Now read the intro to the Galatians' Church, who had listened to another gospel. "I am amazed at how quickly you deserted him... for another gospel...But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be eternally condemned." Didn't hold much back did he?

The Bible teaches "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." (**2Cor 11:14-15**) Peter also spoke of the false prophets and teachers "and in their greed they will exploit you with their false words." (**2 Pet 2:1-3**) John spoke of them in **1John 2:18-19, 4:1-6**. Paul spoke about them a lot, especially at the end of his ministry as in **Acts 20:28-32** stating 'Be on your guard for yourselves and the flock...I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock.' Also check out **1Tim 4:1-5, 2Tim 3:1-9, 4:3-4**.

Probably the worrying aspect is that nearly all of the verses on this topic speak of how it will increase in the last days. So getting back to the original question, how then do you evaluate a prophecy such as this? It sounded realistic given the previous attacks by Nehemiah's enemies. How do you know? I'm sure the temptation for Nehemiah, was to just go with it, and run and hide. What would you do?

Our defense: How much do you love the truth?

Neh 6:11 But I said, 'Should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'

Nehemiah's response gives a good insight into how to discern between true and false prophecies. What did he do? In vs 11 we read *"But I said, 'should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'"* Nehemiah judged the word by two means; Firstly, whether or not it lined up with what he knew to be the will of God for his life. And secondly, whether it lined up with Gods word. His first thought was whether a man like himself should flee. Up until this point Nehemiah had always stood strong and had defeated the enemy by not compromising or acting through fear. Should he now run? He had always said that *"the God of Heaven shall grant us success; therefore we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem ."* (Ch 2:20) He had, up until this point, always acted in faith and with determination. Should he now go against what he believed God was asking from him? Clearly, what the prophet had said was not from God. There was however, a clearer test that had to be applied.

Nehemiah's second thought was *'And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'* Nehemiah had to judge the prophecy by Gods word. The word of God stated that only the Levites *"shall attend to the priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil...but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."* (**Num 18:7**) And yes, Nehemiah was not a Levite. Thankfully however, in a time when most of Israel had forgotten the word of God, Nehemiah still knew the word and judged and acted by its truth! Many could learn from his actions today²³. One question that keeps coming back is just how important is truth? Does it matter what we believe or what is being taught to Gods people? Should we make a deal out of error in the church or just let it ride?

Paul's emphasis on truth and the word of God

Now this is an important question so I will spend a bit of time on it. On the one hand we should never get to the stage where all we are trying to do is make issues out of tiny errors or cause disagreement in areas where judgment is not allowed. (Rom 14). That is a critical spirit and is plain wrong! I do believe though, that the word of God tells us to watch and guard the truth of the gospel. Jesus Himself is the truth (**Jn 14:6**) and its the truth of who He is and what He did that sets us free. It is always the action of the enemy to try to corrupt the truth by sowing seeds of error among the true seed. If we end up with a gospel of half-truths, we'll have converts that are half set free! And as we saw earlier, its the belt of truth that holds all the armour together. If your theology is loose, so is your belt of truth and then so is your armour, and then we're back to where we began - with disciples half set free, trying to live the Christian life without the armour (spiritual protection) God provides! And that's when the Christian life becomes a drag and a chore. So lets look at what the word of God says. The next few verses are what Paul wrote to Timothy. Having now come to the end of his ministry, he was passing on important truths for this young leader. I believe that what he stressed most was guarding and preaching the truth!

- **1 Timothy 1:3** 'As I urged you upon my departure. stay on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines.'
- 1 Timothy: 4:6 'In pointing out these things (correcting wrong teaching in verses 1-5) you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.'
- **1 Timothy 4:13** 'Until I come, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation and teaching.'
- **1 Timothy 4:16** 'Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.. for as you do so you will ensure salvation for yourself and for those who hear you.'
- See also **1 Tim 5:17, 6:2-3, 6:17-18**
- **2 Timothy 2:15** 'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.'
- **2 Timothy 3:16** 'All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.'
- **2 Timothy 4:1-2** 'I solemnly charge you... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.'
- See also **2 Tim 1:13-14, 2:2, 2:24-26, 3:10-15**

I hope you can see where Paul's heart was. Truth is important. A man may say he believes, but if what he believes is a lie, his faith is in vain. Paul described the word of God as being for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness. Two seem positive, two negative. But they are all for the positive in the long run. Part of biblical love is to correct and train. They go hand in hand. Look at the Fathers love. (**Heb 12:5-11**)

From what we have seen of Nehemiah, he was a man of integrity who committed his life and actions to the truth of God's word. He loved the truth! And as we shall now see, through that love and knowledge of God's word he was able to discern the true from the counterfeit, even when Israel's other leaders could not. This is how we see the false 'angels of light' and discern truth from error!

Nehemiah 6:15–7:3 The Last Enemy – Tobiah that 'good' man... Not!

Neh 6:15–19 'So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of *the month* Elul, in fifty-two days. And it came about when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah's *letters* came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Moreover, they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.'

The Wall Completed! Final Victory?

They did it! They finished it. We read in vs 15 'so the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month of Elul, in fifty two days.' We come now to an important time for Nehemiah and his boys for having completed the wall 'it came about when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognised that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.' This at last was the time of victory! They had completed the job, their enemies had lost their confidence, given up, and God himself had brought them through the whole ordeal. No longer were they a reproach; no longer could the enemy have his way. Their walls of salvation were complete and they were doing it! Oh sweet victory! Surely nothing could touch them now? They were a credit to God and a true example of what God was looking for – right?



Um, well wrong actually. For we read in the very next verse 'Also in those days, many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them.' (vs 17). Can you believe it? This very same Tobiah, who had been more than a weasel in previous attacks, was now spreading his influence within the walls! Sure, they had strong walls to keep people out, but he had links to the inside. And nobody but Nehemiah seemed to know what Tobiah's true nature was! How could this happen and how could they be so blind? Well, we read in vs 18-19 'For many in Judah were bound to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah, the son of Arah... moreover, they were speaking in my presence of his good deeds..' He was able to worm his way in because he was a relation and was able to do good deeds when the need arose. The general feeling among the Israelites was that maybe he's not that bad after all? Maybe Nehemiah was wrong in condemning him? Sure, he's got a few rough patches, but there's a lot of good in him too. Maybe Gods people can make use of him after all?

What are you offering up to God?

While its easy to see the true nature of Tobiah when you read the book of Nehemiah, its must have been a lot harder to discern in his day for only Nehemiah himself could see through him. The same is true of us today. You may say that nobody should be sucked in by Tobiah's good deeds but in all likelihood, you're probably offering them up to God yourself. That isn't a condemning thing. It's just a call to realise that much of what we offer God is just the good of old Adam. Usually we're no different.

A example of this in the Old Testament is where King Saul was asked to 'strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has and do not spare him.' (1 Sam15:3) Amalek is probably the best picture in the OT of the fleshly nature. God said he didn't want to see it. What did Saul do? 'Saul defeated the Amalekites...But Saul spared Agag (the King of the Amalekites) and the best of his sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs and all that was GOOD!' (1 Sam15 7-9) Why did he do this? 'Saul said 'they have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord our God.' (1 Sam15:15). He wanted to offer God what God wanted utterly destroyed! He wanted to offer God the best of the Old Man. And he was going to offer it to God at Gilgal! (1 Sam15:21) The place that symbolises the cutting away of the fleshly nature was the place where Saul was going to offer it back to God! What did God do? He got rid of Saul and chose a new King because of this very act! (1 Sam15:23)

So, do you get the picture? I'm sure you do but I'll spell it out anyway. The last enemy to face is Adam the first (Tobiah), the sinful nature within us that, while thoroughly bad by nature, can easily deceive through good deeds. Its ability to do bad

(as we have seen through Tobiah's actions in ch 4-6), is only matched by its ability to do good (seen now, when the pressure comes on and he's likely to be thrown out!²⁴) Tobiah was a relative to God's people Israel and so it is with us. The 'old man' is a relation through our natural birth and will continue to spread his influence over our lives for just as long as we keep corresponding with him. Nehemiah didn't want any letters sent and he certainly didn't want them speaking about Tobiah's so-called 'good deeds'. He knew that the only way to get rid of this pesky relation was to stop talking to him and get everyone to act as if he was dead!

Reckoning Tobiah as Dead

Now that doesn't sound very nice is it? But if you don't treat him as dead, Tobiah will talk and talk and never shut up! The New Testament says it like this: 'Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, in order that the body of sin might be done away with... Even so, reckon yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus...Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead.' (**Rom 6:6-13**) The order is **Know, Reckon, and Present**. If Nehemiah was speaking he'd say 'look, now that the walls are fully built, understand and know that Tobiah doesn't have to have influence over us anymore. So reckon, and consider yourself dead to him from now on! Stop corresponding with him and give yourself solely to God cause he has freed us from the enemies power.'

Easy to put into three nice points, hard to put into practice. But we need to learn. It doesn't matter if we love ourselves or hate ourselves. Doesn't matter if we think we have enough ability to do something, or moan that we have no gifting and ability. Its all focusing on self and seeing how Tobiah is feeling. Hating yourself is the flip side of pride and shows that you're still very interested in self!. The bible teaches us to present ourselves to God on a new principle: 'AS THOSE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD!' This is on resurrection ground where 'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me' and has nothing at all to do with our natural strength.

Now the timing of Tobiah's entrance is also interesting but that is for later... This point and how to combat it will be covered in the next study.

Our Action: Guarding against Complacency

Neh 7:1-3 Now it came about when the wall was rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. Then I said to them, 'Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing *guard*, let them shut and bolt the doors. Also appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each at his post, and each in front of his own house.'

Tobiah sort of wrecked the celebration party didn't he? Seems like this enemy fights to the bitter end. The timing of his entrance is significant because it comes straight after a spiritual high.²⁵ This can be how it is with us. As soon as God has come through and we have had a victory, the old nature is there. Taking God's glory and thoroughly proud of its latest achievements, the old nature would soon have us believe that we are the source of our own strength and victory.²⁶ At this stage it is easy for our daily dependence upon God to dry up, and for 'religion' and 'routines' to take over.

Again though, Nehemiah shows us the attitude needed to gain victory, and the action needed to stay there. We read in **Neh 7:1-2** 'Now it came about when the wall was rebuilt and I had set up the doors... that I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for he feared God more than many .' At a time when complacency and natural strength could easily have taken over, who does Nehemiah put in charge? Two men who 'feared God', and whose names mean 'Jah is gracious'



Never underestimate God's Grace!

Taking a wee detour, let me just say that we should never underestimate God's amazing grace! I read a story recently about C.S Lewis and a debate some of his 'learned' friends were having over Christianity's unique contribution to world religion. With Lewis out of the room they were arguing what truth, if any, was totally unique to Christianity. Some suggested the incarnation but it was quickly pointed out that other religions have god becoming a man. Another suggested the resurrection but again other religions spoke of this happening. At this point Lewis entered the room and asked what all the trouble was about. Upon hearing the question he replied. 'oh that's easy; it's grace!'. So true! The message of grace is totally unique and shows what an awesome God we serve. So don't under-estimate or down play the grace of God!

Now in the meaning of their names (grace), and their attitude towards God (fearing God), I believe we have all that is needed for avoiding the self-dependence and complacency that can occur when things are going good. We have already looked at fearing God, and should know that it is a reverence for God. This reverence keeps the King of Kings in his rightful position in our lives. The 'grace of God' means either the 'unmerited favour' or the 'gifting and enabling' of God. While both are necessary to remember at this time, we have to realise that it is only through God's enabling that we can have victory. With an attitude of fearing God, and a knowledge that it is only through grace that we stand, this form of Tobiah's influence can be resisted and overcome. Nehemiah sure did choose good men to put in charge didn't he? And his action followed his knowledge for he then said *'Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing guard, let them shut and bolt the doors...'* (vs 3)

There wasn't much complacency here! While Nehemiah was around, he was going to make sure that Tobiah would struggle to have any influence at all.

But don't underestimate Tobiah's ability to wriggle and weasel his way to the top again given the opportunity. And that is what we shall look at next.

Nehemiah 13:4-9 Tobiah Part 2: Get him off the throne!

Neh 13:4-7 'Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah, had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils, and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. But during all this *time* I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king, and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.'

Bit of a jump I know, but the last part of this study is in Chapter 13, starting in vs 4. This is the only other section in the book of Nehemiah where we see the influence and tactics of the enemy. I'm sure there is a lot of good stuff in chapters 8-12 but genealogies have never done much for me. But in **Neh 13:4-7** we have a new picture of Tobiah and how God's people use him. The scene is this: the walls and gates are fully restored, and many of the exiles have come back to dwell safely in Jerusalem. (**Neh 7:4-73**). The law of God is read to them, bringing both joy and repentance (Ch 8&9). The Levites are again instructed how to perform their priestly duties. With Nehemiah at the helm, everything is coming back into order and Israel is again living by the truth of God's word. This is the closest they have got to being a godly nation once again. Surely they couldn't ruin it from here could they? What in the whole wide world could possibly go wrong?



Well, something huge actually. We read in vs 4 '*Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah, had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, and the frankincense...*' So right in the heart of the temple, in the room that was formerly used to store the offering for God, sat Tobiah and his possessions! He had got in! Before this, even though many on the inside spoke of his good deeds, he was still on the outside. But now he was not only within the walls, but he was right in the place where he always saw himself - in the center of the Temple! How could this happen? Surely Nehemiah would have stopped it? Well, the answer is in vs 6 where we read '*But during this time I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty second year of Artaxerxes... I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked to leave from the king.*' Nehemiah wasn't there! He set everything in order, then left for a short time and straight away they put the old nature in the heart of the temple! I don't know about you, but I reckon this is one of the clearest pictures of what happens in our own lives, our church life, and the history of God's people as a whole. All three pictures will now be looked at.

Our Life: When the presence and feelings have gone...

We saw earlier that Tobiah, the 'good' of our sinful nature, can get in through complacency and pride after a spiritual high or victory. But what this book also teaches us is that he can take over when Nehemiah leaves. So who is Nehemiah a picture of? I believe that Nehemiah is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the master builder of our salvation. When Nehemiah was around, Tobiah didn't have a chance. But unfortunately, the presence of Nehemiah is not always going to be there.²⁷ This is how it is in our Christian lives. It's easy to 'trust the Lord' and be strong when Nehemiah (Jesus) seems close but what happens when his presence leaves?²⁸ Well, what happened here is that they put Tobiah in the temple! They moved the true offerings out of the temple and replaced it with the old nature. The picture couldn't be clearer and it's something we do all the time without knowing it!

What is it that we offer to God?

What is the offering that God wants today? He wants us to offer ourselves. 'Therefore, I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to offer yourselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is your spiritual service of worship.' (**Rom 12:1**) So that is what people do, but it's done with Tobiah sitting in the offering room in the temple. We offer him our abilities and strengths. We consecrate ourselves and re-surrender time and time again but it only amounts to offering up the old man because we have forgotten one very important principle. And that is, that we are to offer and 'present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead.' (**Rom 6:13**) If Tobiah is sitting in the temple we will seek to by-pass the death sentence on ourselves and offer God our natural strength. The offering that God accepts is as one alive from the dead. Recognising that we died with Christ and have no strength in ourselves, we offer to God our bodies to live in and through.

Offering God the good of your old nature is not what He is after. Being good is not good enough! After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the human heart was pulled in both directions – towards evil and towards being good. But none of it was faith and none of it was dependence upon God. Most of us who have become Christians know fairly well that our good works can't save us, but we tend to think that once saved it's our job to grow and live the Christian life. Sure, we'll pray for 'help' and 'power' from God, but in the end it's up to us! If this is your understanding, then of course you will let Tobiah in, and give him a prominent position in God's temple. Why not, he's a good man isn't he? He can help can he not?



One Deceitful Old Man!

Even Faithful from Pilgrim's Progress was tempted to go after the Old Man (Tobiah). Please look at what happened after he had been talking to the Old Man. It's long but I have to write the whole thing!

Christian: Did you meet with any other assault as you traveled?

Faithful: When I came to the hill of difficulty, I met a very aged man who asked me who I was and where I was going. I told him that I was a pilgrim going to the Celestial City. Then he said "You look like an honest fellow; would you be content to live with me for the wages I shall give you?" Then I asked him his name and where he lived. He said his name was the First Adam and that he lived in the town of Deceit. I asked him then what kind of work he had and what wages he would pay. He told me that his work contained many delights and for my wages I should be his heir. I asked him what kind of house he had and what other servants. So he told me that his house contained all the delicious things in the world and his servants were his children. He said he had but three daughters: The Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and that I could marry them all if I liked. Then I asked him how long he wanted me to live with him, and he said as long as he himself lived. At first I was somewhat inclined to go with this man... but looking at his forehead as I talked with him, I saw written "Put off the old man with his deeds."

Christian: And then what?

Faithful: I told him that he could quit talking for I would not come near the door of his house. Then he reviled me and told me he would send one after me who would make my way miserable...Now when I had got about half way up, I looked behind and saw someone coming after me swift as the wind...As soon as the man overtook me, he knocked me down. When I came to myself I asked him why he had treated me so. He said "Because of your secret interest in the First Adam."

We'll look at what the answer is for this but I first want to look at this situation from the Church level.

The Church: Lights, camera, action.

We read earlier vs 4 which said that *'Eliashib the priest, being related to Tobiah, had prepared a large room for him...'* One question must be asked – Why would a leader of God's people give Tobiah such a position once Nehemiah had left? Eliashib, for one reason or another, cannot have truly known Tobiah's nature. If he did, then Eliashib must have come under pressure to allow Tobiah in. And while it doesn't say it, the nobles of Jerusalem who had earlier written letters to Tobiah may have pressured him. They had spoken of his good deeds in Nehemiah's presence.

Whatever the reason, one thing is clear and that is that not long after Nehemiah left, he was replaced with Tobiah. Scary thought that we would replace the true presence of God for the religion and manipulation of the old nature, but it is done none the less. Look at some of the hype and 'performances' in the western church. Even the world can spot it. Evangelism comes down to using the worlds marketing principles. Psychology has replaced the Bible in counselling. Fame and riches are now the will of God for our lives because 'Jesus was extremely rich when he was on earth!' The worship is usually of the rock band up the front, and for goodness sake, somebody unplug that person on the keyboards that just has to start up the emotional music when the preacher begins giving the altar call!²⁹ For just a moment, try to put any of these principles into the context of the early church.

Now don't get me wrong. It's not all like this fortunately, but there's certainly enough of it around to see Tobiah at home in the western church. So getting back to the first question. Why does Tobiah get such a place in the church? I think it is mainly due to the pressure to perform, which incidentally, comes because of our fascination with numbers and outward success. The structure of the church doesn't help much either because it keeps the masses silent while one man is left to keep the show rolling. A lot of the church leaders who use these methods genuinely want people saved and growing in their Christian lives, but they are pragmatists – the end justifies the means. What did Nehemiah do when he got back? He *'threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room... and they cleansed the room; and I returned the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings...'* (vs 8-9) In other words, Nehemiah didn't care what success or good works Tobiah did. If the source of the deeds was the flesh, then God wouldn't accept the results³⁰. The end certainly didn't justify the

means. Again Nehemiah found himself back where he began - getting rid of the rubbish and re-establishing truth. What else could he do? Just leave Tobiah there and act like everything's ok? No, this was the only way to go ahead.

Our Need: To get to the heart of the problem

Neh 13:8-9 'And it was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room. Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense.'

This of course is the answer, both for individuals and for churches, because this is the only cleansing that gets to the heart of the matter. A lot of people talk about being cleansed and forgiven because they can clearly see their sin, guilt and eventual hypocrisy, but it only amounts to what they do, not what they are. That kind of cleansing becomes a drag because you never get anywhere. It's just a vicious circle of cleansing, trying harder, blowing it, cleansing, trying harder...This is what it's like under the law. As we saw in the Pilgrim's Progress quote above, someone came after Faithful and knocked him down. This man was Moses because Faithful had been talking to Adam the First. And Moses will do this every time we try living through our own strength. Living by the law actually causes us to sin more, which causes Moses to whack us again!³¹ And then we seek more forgiveness, more strength and decide to give it a better shot! (Is this the one lesson that takes our whole life to learn?)

The cleansing that Nehemiah used went straight to the heart of the matter - getting rid of the source of the problem. Nehemiah didn't simply warn people not to talk or act like Tobiah³². He went straight to the temple and cleared the whole place out!.

Going to the source of the problem

It's easy to deal with Tobiah's (fleshly old nature) outward sins, trying to pick them off one by one, and forget about the source of those sins. This cleansing dealt to the source of the problem: Tobiah and all his belongs were thrown out! Watchman Nee gave the best example of this that I can remember (hope I can!):

Lets say you got fed up with all the alcohol in the city and decided to get rid off it all. Well, you go from house to house, finding and smashing all the bottles, determined to get on top of the situation. The problem is, that while you are going from house to house, the local factory is producing more and more bottles! If you don't go to the source of the problem (the factory) you are wasting your time! The Apostle Paul made a wonderful discovery that finally set him free. He found out that he was the problem! (**Rom 7:24-25**) And if he was the problem, then he couldn't be the answer. He then discovered two things:

1. That the law of the Spirit of life can set you free from the law of sin and death.
2. And that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. (**Rom 8.1-2**)

Once this had happened, the true offerings could be made to God, and no more would Tobiah's influence spread within the walls. (That is, just as long as they didn't start writing those letters again!) There, it sounds easy doesn't it??? In reality we can only learn this through experience. The Bible says to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We grow in His grace as we see our need and rely upon His strength in our daily walk. That's the only way. You may grow in the knowledge of Him through reading this study but you will not grow in grace. That only occurs as we put into action the knowledge that we have learnt. Tobiah is not meant to be in the temple. They weren't even to correspond with him, but were to treat him as though he was dead. It makes sense to follow this advice and only present ourselves to God on the basis of life from the dead - on the basis of who God is and not who we are. Do that and Tobiah will not gain a foothold in your life.

Conclusion to our Nehemiah Study

The Holy Spirit has inspired every book in the bible. He could have chosen anything He wanted to put in. He chose to include this book about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. And while I once thought it was a nice historical book about one man's determination and commitment, I now know that the Holy Spirit put definite types and pictures in it to teach God's people how to resist the enemy and build a strong salvation. Now that is not the only focus of the book and I'm not saying I got it all right, but like Ruth, Esther, and other historical "story" type books, there is much more in these books than we can usually see. God has layers in His truth and He is ALWAYS interested in teaching His people how to grow, overcome the enemy and be fruitful!

So what did we see? Who is the enemy and how does he act? How do we combat it? I've tried to sum up what's been said in this table.

Enemy	Form of Attack	Stage of Wall	Our Defense
Sanballat (Satan)	In the mind - fear, doubt and mockery	No Wall	Armour of God - Helmet of Salvation
Sanballat (Satan)	Physical trials and attacks	Half height	Alert, Sword of the Spirit, Full armour on
Geshem (World)	Compromise - worldly success and wealth	Full - No gates	Remember the good eternal work of God
Geshem (World)	Fear of man and slander	Full - No gates	Fear of God and living for eternity
Sanballat/Tobiah (Satan/Sinful Nature)	False prophecy	Full - No gates	Know, love and live by the truth
Tobiah (Sinful nature)	Influenced by his 'good works'	Completed	Recognise the deception, treat Tobiah as dead!
Tobiah (Sinful nature)	Tobiah at home in the temple	Completed	Full cleansing and remove him from his place of honour!

Stay Close to the Cross & Resurrection

Hopefully you get the picture. What does need to be stressed though, even at this late stage is that all of our defense is based around the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the victory that He won for us.

- If Sanballat attacks, use the armour of God. But realise that every piece of the armour is an aspect of Jesus' victory. He is the truth, He is our peace, He is our righteousness, He is our faith, He is our salvation, He is the word of God.
- If Geshem tries to lure you out, remember the real home that Jesus is preparing for us, and the closeness of eternity.
- If Tobiah seems less than dead, reckon again on the resurrection and Jesus' life in us, and present yourself to God as alive from the dead! Don't carry on corresponding with him but treat him as though he were dead.

Thanks for reading this study and I hope you have benefited from it. May God Bless!

Appendix: Nehemiah and the two comings of Jesus

While reading this last section on Tobiah sneaking in when Nehemiah was away, it occurred to me that there is a bigger picture here. So far, most of the studies have been on how to recognise and defeat the Christian's three enemies - Satan (Sanballat), the World (Geshem), and the Old Nature (Tobiah), and it's been mostly from the individuals level. But I now think that the book of Nehemiah also gives us a wider view of history, spanning the first and second comings of Jesus. Have a look at some of the comparisons:

Jesus' First Coming

- **The cupbearer of the king** - The book starts with Nehemiah as the cupbearer to the king. Such a position allowed him to sit at the right hand of the king, as he had to drink the king's cup to test it for poison. He therefore had to be willing to die for the king if necessary. In like manner, Jesus was willing to drink the cup the Father had for him (**Matt 26:39-42**), even though it meant his death.
- **Willing to forsake his high position** - Nehemiah was willing to forsake this high position he had with the king for the sake of God's people. Likewise, though Jesus dwelt at the right hand of the Father, He was willing to give up his riches with the Father and become poor for our sake (**2Cor 8:9**).
- **The journey to Jerusalem** - Upon seeing the condition of God's people and the state of Jerusalem, Nehemiah left the king and went to Jerusalem to free his brothers from the bondage of their enemies. This pictures how Jesus, when the appointed time had come, left the Father and came to Jerusalem to free his brothers from their spiritual bondage.
- **Weeping over Jerusalem and God's people** - Upon seeing Jerusalem, Nehemiah wept openly about her state. Likewise with Jesus who wept over Jerusalem (**Luke 19:41**).
- **Begin building the walls of salvation, overcoming the enemy** - Nehemiah then began building the walls of Jerusalem to restore God's glory and bring salvation and protection for God's people. In building the walls, Nehemiah had to overcome the efforts of Sanballat (Satan), Geshem (the World), and Tobiah (the Old Nature). Jesus began rebuilding our salvation and restored the glory to God's name that had been lost (**John 17:4**). In doing so he defeated Satan's attacks, the call of worldly compromise, and nailed the old nature to the cross! (**Matt 4:1-11, Col 2:13-15, Rom 6:6**)
- **Reestablishing the truth and priesthood** - Before going back to the king, Nehemiah re-established the truth of God's word and set the priesthood up again so that all would be done according to God's covenant. Before going back to the Father, Jesus established the church, the truth of the new covenant and the priesthood of all believers (**Matt 26:26-30, Acts 1:3, 1 Pet 2:9, Rev 1:6**).



Church Age

- **While gone, God's people allow Tobiah back in** - While Nehemiah was back with the king, God's people gave Tobiah a prominent place within the house of God, because he was a relative who they had known for a long time and they were not able to see through his 'good deeds'. While Jesus has gone back to the Father, yeah well... judge for yourself what the church has done with the old fleshly nature!

Jesus' Second Coming

- **On his return, God's enemy is thrown out!** - When Nehemiah returns from the king, he goes back to Jerusalem and finding God's enemy in Jerusalem, he throws Tobiah out and cleanses the whole place. When Jesus returns from the Father, he comes back to Jerusalem, and defeats God's enemies there (**Zech 12:1-9, Zech 14:1-4**) removing everything that is not of God. Cleansing is then set up for the people (**Zech 13:1** - This happens straight after he defeats Israel's enemies in **Zech 12:1-9** and they finally recognise him! **Zec 12:10**).
- **The Temple, Priesthood and Sabbath reinstated** - Nehemiah then sets up the temple and priesthood again, and reinstates the Sabbath rest. After cleansing Jerusalem, Jesus again sets up the temple and priesthood (Ezekiel Chapters 40-47) and initiates the true Sabbath rest - the millennial reign (1000 years of Jesus' kingdom **Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:1-10, 66:17-25**).

- **Obedience to truth and righteousness** – Even after this period Nehemiah still wouldn't tolerate sin or actions that were not based on God's word. At one stage he 'struck some of them and pulled out their hair' (a real man!!) and drove another away from him. Now I'm not saying that Jesus is going to be a hair puller, but in his millennial reign he will 'rule with an rod of iron' (**Rev 2:26, 12:5, 19:15**)

I hope you can see some of the similarities. Obviously, not everything is the perfect picture (I sort of hoped Nehemiah was going to die and then come back to life – but that may be asking too much!), but hopefully there is enough there to see why I think Nehemiah is a type of Jesus.

FOOTNOTES

Nehemiah Chapter 1: Understanding the nature of the fall

[1] Nehemiah means 'the comfort of Jehovah'. His father Hacaliah means 'waiting on Jehovah'. Isn't it interesting how much meaning there is in their names? Hacaliah would probably have lived his whole life in exile, with Jerusalem destroyed and Israel in a state of despair. Truly he would have been 'waiting on Jehovah'. When his son was born he called him 'the comfort of Jehovah' and Nehemiah would grow and truly become that to his people Israel.

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[2] There's more to this than I first thought. What I've just written about the attitude needed in becoming a Christian is one aspect, but there's a bigger picture lurking here! I've just read a little more about being a cupbearer. The cupbearer was situated at the right hand of the king and had to drink the cup of the king to check for poison. Obviously, 'checking for poison' meant being willing to give up his own life for the king's sake. Nehemiah is a picture of Jesus Christ! It was Jesus, who being situated at the right hand of God, was willing to give up his life for the sake of the Father. Did he not know the consequences of the cup he had to drink? We read in **Matt 26:38-39** 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death;... My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as you will.' Like Nehemiah coming to Jerusalem, Jesus had to leave the Father for this cup to be drunk. And yet through it, the walls of salvation would be built and ALL enemies would be defeated!

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Nehemiah Chapter 2: The Reproach, the Rock & the Rubble

[3] Laodicea mean 'the peoples opinions'. And that is what we commonly see today unfortunately.

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[4] Thankfully, nothing will. This statement of Nehemiah for the Jerusalem that he was going to rebuild is true of all Christians today even though we don't always see it. From Gods perspective we were associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus and he will never ever see us independent of the work of his son again. From Gods perspective the sinful nature died at Calvary (**Rom 6:6**), and all that remains is the new creation (**2Cor 5:17**). That new creation is hid in God and as safe as can be. (**Col 3.3-4**). Satan was defeated at the cross (**Col 2:13-15**) and even the world can't influence the new creation which is already 'seated in heavenly places' (**Eph 2:6**) The final fulfilment of this verse however, is in the age to come for all three enemies will have no portion or right in the New Jerusalem (**Rev 21:27** 'nothing unclean... shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the lamb's book of life). Nor shall there be any memorials in the New Jerusalem for 'the former things shall not come to mind.'

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Nehemiah Chapter 3: The Gates of Spiritual Progression

[5] I first wrote this study in 1998 (or thereabouts). When I studied this chapter I could see that there were personal and prophetic aspects to the gates and noted what I saw. What I didn't realize however is that all of the gates have both a prophetic and personal significance. Specifically, I didn't realize that in the gates there is a progression throughout church history from the first coming of the Lord to His return at the end of the age! Pretty cool stuff! So now (2014) I thought I'd update this study with the new insight that I have. A book that helped me see that all of the gates have prophetic significance in the plan of God for the ages was 'Messianic Psalms' by Norbert Lieth. This book (which I recommend) is not on this topic specifically but has a page or two about the gates of Jerusalem which helped extend my understanding on what God was prophetically showing and motivated me to 'dig' a little deeper in this chapter once again.

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Nehemiah Chapter 4:1-6 Sanballat's Initial Attack: Confuse that mind

[6] But believe me, on the whole he is good at keeping things hidden! Given the statement "Satan is not a living being but a symbol of evil" 62% agreed in a recent survey. Now we can expect this from the world and shouldn't be surprised, but this one is a shock - of those that called themselves 'born again Christians', 52% agreed. And just for interest sake, 72% of Catholics agreed, and split between the sexes, 64% of women agreed, 59% of men agreed.

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[7] The hatred of Satan (Sanballat) is, first and foremost, towards God. It was Gods throne that he thought he should be above! Filled with pride, he still desires to 'be like the most high!' His consuming ambition then, is to destroy the work of God - that which God loves. That is why he immediately attacked Adam & Eve - that which was the highest in Gods creation

and called 'very good!' Fortunately, the last Adam wasn't so easy. His hatred of us then, is not that personal but due to the fact that we are God's workmanship.

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[8] So you blew it? You are not alone. The same doubts, fear and mockery that Nehemiah and his builders faced, have been thrown down for quite a while. Sanballat's doubts were in the garden with "has God really said 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?' and even with the Lord saying 'If you are the Son of God...'. His fear was placed upon Peter who even denied knowing the Lord to a little girl. Peter's three denials seem very much to be the result of Satan's request to 'sift Peter like wheat.' Or, through his subtlety, Satan can even lift you up with pride. We read in **1Chron 21:1** "Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." A huge sin costing many lives. It is with this in mind that Paul said that elders must "not be a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil" (**1Tim3:6**) All these people fell to attacks in the mind.

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[9] Just thinking of **John 8:44** which says 'Whenever he (Satan) speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.' Contrast this with God who, according to **Titus 1:2** 'cannot lie!' So believe God's word not the doubts that come into your mind!

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Nehemiah Chapter 4:7-15 Sanballat's Second Attack: Physical Persecution

[10] So, you're in a spot of bother! Bit of an attack you reckon?? Then who is the one who fights the battle - God or man? Or in other words, who lives the Christian life? Again Nehemiah gives us insight into this aspect, which may help. On the one hand we can NEVER, EVER forget that "the Lord does not deliver by sword or spear (your natural fleshly effort); for the battle is the Lord's" (**1Sam 17:47**) and that "without me, you can do nothing!" (**John 15:5**) God living in man is the essence of the Christian life, Christ in us our only hope of returning to the glory from which we have fallen (**Col 2:27, Rom 3:23**). Anything we try to do apart from this basis is sin because it is not based on faith (**Rom 14:23**) and in the end will only produce a heck of a lot of wood, hay and stubble!

Yet, we cannot ignore the commands to be alert, sober and watchful (1Thess 6-8), to resist the enemy (**1Pet 5:9**), and to put on the full armour of God (**Eph 6:11**). These things are directed at us to do. Nehemiah knew that dependence upon God was essential and prayed to God. He also knew that a true faith and dependence acts, and was on guard, ready, day and night. The two sides of the coin are seen in verses such as "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might", "For this purpose I labour, striving according to his power which mightily works within me", "therefore, let us be diligent to enter the rest", "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do." It is an attitude that faces every difficulty with "I can't, but you can. Thank you Father that you are everything I need in this situation." and then steps out!

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[11] I tend to play a lot of tennis and if it's an important match then it is necessary to quickly establish where the opponents' weakness is and then exploit it! Cruel I know, but necessary. If they have a bad backhand then I'll keep plugging away at that weakness and sooner or later they will begin to lose confidence and it will become much easier to win points. Our enemy isn't any different. He will exploit the weak areas - be sure of it. Nehemiah knew it. If it means running round your backhand, run round your backhand. If it means not going or putting yourself into situations or places that cause you to be tempted then do that!

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[12] Pop Quiz Time... For 40 points and a starter of 10, "What command did Jesus give more than any other?" That's right! "Do not be afraid!" He obviously knew human nature pretty well! I like the amplified version of when Jesus came to the disciples walking on the water. They were in a storm (trial) and Jesus wasn't with them (or didn't seem to be. Surprise, surprise!) They were freaking out cause Jesus didn't seem to know anything about it (or care) when suddenly he comes, calm as can be saying 'Stop being frightened, I AM!' He was again reminding them that even when he doesn't seem close, he is still in total control, the eternal I AM. Everything we will ever need.

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Nehemiah 6:1-9 The Trump Card: Geshem and Worldly Compromise

[13] Yes, yes, I know. They still had gaps where the gates should be so they still had to be on their toes, but what I was meaning is that no longer could the enemy just ride on in and take what he wanted. They were at last protected! Alright?? :

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[14] Worldliness is written about quite a bit in the NT. I guess John gives the best definition: 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.' (**1John 2:15-16**). James probably shows how serious it is for our relationship with God. "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (**James 4:4**) He also gives us God's heart in the matter when he writes "Or do you think that the scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He JEALOUSLY desires the Spirit which he made to dwell among us.' " (**James 4:5**) Job shows us the stupidity of it all "They send forth their little ones like the flock, and their children skip about. They sing to the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the flute. They spend their days in prosperity, and suddenly they go down to Sheol. They say to God 'Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of your ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve him! And what do we gain if we entreat him?'

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[15] It never ceases to amaze me how much the gospel has been changed lately to accommodate worldliness and the love of money. It's not uncommon to hear things like 'we are the kings kids so we should live like it' or 'Jesus was rich so I'm only walking in his ways'. What a joke! If you hear drivel like this, I advise you to re-read Jesus' letter to the Laodicean church in **Revelation 3:14-22**. He speaks there of what is considered true riches (vs 18) and no wonder He is pictured as outside of the church!

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[16] Just heard a report about China and the underground churches. For years they have been persecuted mentally and physically, but the church has been growing in huge numbers even in the midst of this persecution. Just recently however as China has been opening up a lot more to the west, the new enemy worldliness has entered, which the Chinese Christians have not faced before. The report I heard was that many are finding this harder for their Christian lives than persecution and imprisonment. The young Christians are asking the older Christians how to cope with it, which at this time, they have no answer to.

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[17] There are different kinds of fears - Peladophobia (the fear of bald people), and Chaetophobia (the fear of hairy people) being two of the stranger examples. But what is the fear of man? It is an unhealthy worry or concern about what people think of you, or will do to you. It leads to trying to please man, not God. It's huge and a great tactic of Satan's. It is said in the bible to be a snare or a trap that immobilises you! (**Proverbs 29:25**)

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[18] Even a brief overview of the Bible shows some big names that have fallen or been influenced by the fear of man. It was this fear that caused Abraham (the Father of faith!) to twice say that Sarah was his sister before Pharaoh and King Abimelech. It caused Aaron to bow to the people's opinions and make a golden calf. It caused 2/3 of Gideon's army to leave as well as forcing Elijah to run and hide in a cave from Jezebel. The fear of man made Nicodemus come to Jesus by night, Pilate to condemn Jesus, and caused even Peter to not eat with Gentiles when Jews were around.

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Nehemiah 6:2-3 Our Defense: Recognising the great work

[19] Again, the size of an act is not the issue. God looks at the heart. Even small acts done in faith and love will be fully rewarded in heaven. **Matt 10:32**. And therefore, they are great works! They will last for eternity.

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[20] Here are a few anyway, some of which were stated in the small study on worldliness earlier on.

1John 2:15-16 carries on in vs 17 with 'The world is passing away, and also is its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.' James chapter 4 and 5 is about worldliness and he finishes up with 'Therefore be patient brethren until the coming of the Lord...Strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near!' **1Pet 4:2-7** is a passage on worldly lusts and ends with 'they will have to give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead... The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit.'

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[21] Paul obviously knew the reality of heaven. He had been caught up there, seeing and hearing inexpressible things. (**2Cor 12:2**) And he wanted to go back! Listen to his desire - 'for to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.' (**Phil**

1:21-24) That should be our desire as well.

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Nehemiah 6:10-14 Sanballat Strikes Back – The angel of light!

[22] Yeah, sort of given it away haven't I? False words and prophecies only come from one of two places:

1) They are inspired by Satan as warned by Jesus that in the last days false Christ's and false prophets will deceive many.

(Matt 24:5, 11, 24) This is Sanballat again at work.

2) The words and prophecies can come from the flesh, and its usually the religious flesh (Tobiah) seeking honour and glory for himself that's says such things. As in **Col 2:18** where Paul warns against those who "take their stand on visions they have seen, inflated without cause by their fleshly mind."

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[23] Both Old and New Testaments tell us to go to the word to judge things. Why is it that this is now frowned upon? Isn't it the attitude of the world to tolerate all things and not have any base to judge things by? But Gods word still gives us the attitude that God is after. "When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter'...To the word and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word it is because they have no light." **(Isa 8:19-20)** The New Test. tells us 'not to exceed what is written' **(1Cor 4:6)** and when Paul preached to the Bereans it is written that the Bereans 'were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.' **(Acts 17:11)** Paul didn't just want them to accept everything he said (even though it was true). These Bereans were commended because they went back to the word each day to see whether what Paul was saying was the truth or not. I believe that the prophetic gift is a gift of the Spirit and is still for use today. Just don't be naïve. **1 Thess 5:20-21** 'Do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully and hold on to what is good.' Christians should be able to discern by the word. It is only spiritual babies who cannot. **(Heb 5:12-14)**

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Nehemiah 6:15-7:3 The Last Enemy – Tobiah that 'good' man... Not!

[24] Mmmm. I'm still thinking about getting the best out of Tobiah (see last footnote). Its easy to spot Tobiah when he's immoral, impure, jealous, hateful etc **(Gal 5:20)** but that's not how we find Tobiah here. The walls of salvation are built. It's time for Tobiah to go. But he's willing to do anything to avoid the cross! It really is quite hard to realise as Paul did that 'in me dwells no good thing, that is in my flesh.' We tend to think of the Christian life as God slowly cleaning us up as if the old nature just needs a scrub up! While nobody would say it, we sort of think like this – When we start our Christian life we need God 100% as being babies, we have no strength or holiness. Given time we gain some strength, start to walk on our own and need God 50% of the time. Taken to the logical conclusion, soon we'll have totally cleaned our lives up and God will look down from heaven and applaud our efforts, and we won't need him at all! May sound stupid put like that but we do think that God is making us better in ourselves. The truth is just the opposite. All that we are naturally was so useful to God he nailed it to the cross and gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our only hope of glory (that which we had fallen short of). If a Christian is to grow, he must grow through this attitude – 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

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[25] Probably the best example of this is Israel in the wilderness. As soon as they drank from the rock (meaning filled with the spirit), they were attacked by Amalek! (The BEST picture of the flesh.) The only way Israel could win this battle was for Moses to die to his ability to win the battle! When his arms were raised to heaven in an attitude of surrender, Amalek was defeated. And look at what God thinks of Amalek – 'I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.' (This he did, once and for all at the cross). 'The Lord will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation.' (This he continues to do in our lives because we don't know what he did at the cross – but notice its his fight!) See **Exodus 17:1-16**

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[26] While Paul would give credit where credit was due, he would never do it where God alone should get the glory. Some people make it sound like we saved ourselves, and God should be fortunate that we chose him! Salvation is one of those areas that God alone should get the glory. When asked who can be saved, Jesus replied 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' **(Matt 19:26)** Paul said that we are 'saved by grace through faith', and then adds that even that faith is a gift of God! **(Eph 2:8)**. To the Corinthians, some of whom were becoming arrogant, Paul wrote 'what do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?' **(1Cor 4:7)** While we may not understand some of the mysteries surrounding the grace and election of God, we still know that the only thing we can boast in is the cross.' **(Gal 6:12)**

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Nehemiah 13:4-9 Tobiah Part 2: Get him off the throne!

[27] Jesus told us 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' (**Heb 13:5**) This is true of born again Christians for eternity. But we all go through periods (sometimes prolonged) where his presence doesn't seem with us. Its not that he isn't with us, it just doesn't seem like he is. He is trying to teach us the nature of faith. That faith is not based on our feelings or our sense of his presence, but his character and truth which never changes.

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[28] We should not be surprised by the presence of God coming and going.. Look at King David, a 'man after God's own heart', and read his psalms. Often you find him crying out not knowing where God is, and not understanding why God is so silent. He had great highs and awesome fellowship with God, but he also had terrible lows where God seemed nowhere. God used them both.

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[29] I'm not trying to be a moaner here. It's just that Jesus was the ultimate non-showman. He didn't 'perform' for people or try to win them at any cost. When He became popular and they wanted to make him king, He withdrew and walked away by himself. (**John 6:15**). When many decided not to follow him anymore, his reaction was 'for this reason I said to you that nobody can come to me unless it is granted him from the Father.' (**John 6:65**) He didn't play on people's emotions or pressure them into following him. He said and did what he heard the Father saying and doing, and let truth pierce the heart.

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[30] Ok, so even a trickster could lead someone to Christ and the salvation would be genuine because God looks at the heart of the person coming to him. But he's even more likely to be a contributing factor in the 80-90% fall away rate that American evangelists now ACCEPT, through crusades and local church preaching. (Ray Comfort - Hells Best Kept Secret.)

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[31] Yep, that was the number one reason the law was given. To show a fallen race that they desperately need a savior. And how it does it is by showing, exposing, & increasing our sin. **Rom 5:20** 'The Law was added so that sin would INCREASE.' **Rom 7:7** 'I would not have come to know what sin was except through the law...but sin, taking the opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind.' **1Cor 15:56** 'The sting of death is sin, and THE POWER OF SIN IS THE LAW!' If you read the Bible as a list of rules and laws, of course you will try to keep them, and of course you'll end up using your own strength, and of course Moses will whack you!

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[32] I've heard some good sermons on guarding the tongue and watching what it says. Usually from James (uh, the book, not the speaker.). All about how it can cause fires or steer ships or something. Anyway, that's all true, but guarding what comes out of your mouth is not where it's at. The problem is much deeper and much worse! What kind of victory is it to be fuming inside, but to keep it down by biting your tongue? Isn't the true problem the attitudes and thoughts of the heart? That's where the cleansing is needed.

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