

A Brick in One Hand and a Sword in the Other

By Randal Stephens

In a world full of destruction, building can be an almost impossible task. But if the Lord builds the house, the labor is fruitful¹. If the house is built upon a solid foundation, it will stand². The Bible is clear: building is essential. That was something Nehemiah knew all too well.

In order to understand why, a little history is in order. When Jerusalem fell to Babylon and the Jews were scattered in exile, many came to serve under pagan kings. Nehemiah was one; he was cupbearer to Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah had heard that many Jews who survived the exile were making their way back into Jerusalem but were in trouble. Jerusalem, specifically the wall and its gates, lay in ruin under its own rubble.

Nehemiah was distraught so he sought leave from Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, who sent him with favor, but also with protection and supplies.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he assessed the damage, telling no one of his plans. When he was ready, he approached the city officials and the work began. But it wasn't easy.

During the next fifty-two days, the people worked around the clock, facing many hardships. The work caused financial strain and fatigue. But the greatest threat to the work, and to the people themselves, came from surrounding nations.

At first, they only ridiculed the Jews, but as the work progressed, their intimidation increased. They even plotted to attack the Jews. But the people persevered.

They posted a guard, formed a battle plan; they wore their swords at all times, even to get water, and they worked with materials in one hand and a weapon in the other.

And they finished the work.

So if you're faced with the daunting task of building, or of the tougher task of rebuilding, there is an enemy who doesn't want you to succeed. He will oppose you in ways you may not always see coming and he will press you into quitting if he can.

And you will have to take up your sword, which is the Word of God³, because this enemy will not stop.

But the work must continue. You may lose sleep and the work may slow, but you will see the progress. Don't get caught resting in your progress though, because the enemy is still out there and a wall half-built is very easy to destroy.

So be vigilant and continue the work, even if you have to do it with a brick in one hand and a sword in the other.

¹Psalms 127:1

²Luke 6:4

³Ephesians 6:17