

Week 2: A Power We Must Receive - The Comfort of the Holy Spirit

Day 14: Both Hands

The Passage: Nehemiah 4:1-23

The Focus: "Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked." (Nehemiah 4:17b-18)

The Meditation: "Did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other."

Empowering Truths: I was a decent basketball player in my small Kansas high school. I was especially good on defense. But the most difficult player I ever had to guard was a short kid who was ambidextrous. He could dribble, shoot, and pass with right or left hand equally well. I had never tried to defeat someone who played excellently with both hands.

Nehemiah's mission to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem was met with opposition, ridicule, lies, and death threats. Nehemiah's solution was to teach his teammates to use "both hands." I get the picture of men with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. Nehemiah exhorted them to be both workers and warriors.

Churches and leaders tend to be one-handed. Some major in the "trowels" of strategy, systems, structure, programs, leadership, facilities, and excellence. Conversely, others focus on the "weapons" of prayer, intercession, spiritual warfare, faith, and the supernatural. Some are using their trowels and forgetting their swords. Others swing the sword but neglect their trowels. Building God's wall requires both hands.

We can't lean into empowerment without simultaneously facing the reality of spiritual opposition. This is what Paul teaches in Ephesians 6:10-11: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power . . . so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Any gains in our empowerment will be met with fresh attacks by the evil one.

This is one reason Jesus taught us to engage in spiritual warfare daily, "Deliver us from evil," or as many translations read, "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). As we are praying for God's "kingdom to be built on earth as it is in heaven," we are also praying, "Defeat the destroyer of your kingdom." It is a "both handed" prayer.

Using the Ephesians 6 imagery, in one hand we carry the sword, which is the Word of God. It has been pointed out that the sword is the only offensive piece of armor listed. In the other hand we carry the shield of faith, our primary defensive piece of armor.

One vital practice is daily praying "the shield of faith" over your life and ministry (Ephesians 6:16). There is no question that the devil's arrows carrying the fire of lies, doubt, exhaustion, accusations, condemnation, comparison, and envy are being shot in your direction daily. The question is whether you will meet those with prayers and declarations of faith!

"Watch" is a New Testament word we fail to give enough weight to. Over twenty-times the Scriptures command us to "watch" or "be alert" to the work of the evil one. Scripture is directing us to daily diligence against the one sneaking around to destroy us.

At the same time we must not live in fear. Instead, we must remember and declare to ourselves and to the devil: we are fighting from victory, not fighting for victory. "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This is the "help of the Holy Spirit" that the New Testament church was "walking in" (Acts 9:31).

If we use both hands in ministry, we will soon raise both hands in victory!

Power Truth: Our spiritual power will be contested, but as we build and fight, we will see the mission accomplished.

Our Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to the reality of my spiritual enemy. Empower me to "watch" for his strategies against me and my ministry. Help me actively build your kingdom as I also defend it . . . doing both with your authority. Today I raise the shield of faith over all aspects of my life, my relationships, and my ministry. Today I claim the power of your victory for me and declare the defeat of the evil one.