

Watch and Work

Introduction

- Progress in ministry from the people of God stirs up ridicule & threats of violence from opponents (4:1-9).
- Ridicule & threats of violence from opponents stir up prayer & precaution from the people of God (v. 4-6, 9) – **asking for help & a mighty miracle while doing what is practical & wise.**
- During times of extensive difficulties in ministry, believers often get physically & emotionally weary (v. 10-12).
- Believers in difficult ministry are encouraged as family members work together while serving God as a priority (v. 13-14).
- Praying believers have **a mind to work** (v. 6).

I. Progress After One Battle (v. 15-20)

- A. Giving God credit for past success (v. 15)
God fights battles for believers in difficult ministries in many miraculous ways - destroys opponents' strategies, resources, threats, etc. (1Sam. 17:47). God gives believers the wisdom & resources to progress and God deserves all the credit – "God had frustrated their plan". After a battle is won, believers must proceed in ministry – "returned to the wall". Believers must avoid premature celebration over one battle - a waste of valuable time & a distraction (Lk. 10:17-20).
- B. Building on past success (v. 16-20)
Sometimes the opponents retract to establish new strategies, but believers must still proceed in ministry wisely with precautions. Reorganization & new assignments are often necessary in successful ministry (v. 16-17a). All forms of ministry are important – building, protecting, helping, etc. (publically, privately, unnoticed...). New strategies to address opposition are also often needed & leaders must give clear instructions in ministry (v. 17b-20a). Everyone involved in ministry is also a soldier & must be ready to fight for the ministry – each "held his weapon" & "had his sword strapped at his side" (v. 17b-18). Leaders must live by faith & reassure others in the ministry to live by faith & trust God likewise (v. 20b).

II. Progress Facing Another Battle (v. 21-23)

- A. Maintaining the progress made (v. 21-22)
Believers must continue in godly disciplines & practices that enabled initial progress in order to sustain the ministry work (2Tim. 3:14). The wise use of time every day is important in ministry (v. 21; Eph. 5:15-16). And believers must not lose ground in ministry for lack of awareness or alertness (v. 22; 1Co. 16:13; Ac. 20:29-31).
- B. Sacrificing for the progress made (v. 23)
Sustaining a ministry effort for the Lord requires great personal sacrifice from everyone involved – I, my brothers, my servants & the men. Everyone must count the cost & be determined to finish what we started. Leaders & other believers who are personally involved must sacrifice comforts & pleasures at times in difficult ministries.

ILL: A football team progresses toward the goal line by a series of first downs (10 yards each). Progress is difficult because the opposing team has developed strategies to prevent the offensive team from moving forward. Even when a first down is secured, the offensive team must be wise & alert to ensure that the progress is not lost through penalties or broken plays.

APPL: The same is true in the kingdom of God...

CONCLUSION

So then my beloved brother or sister I ask you again, can you detect opposition to the ministry efforts the Lord has called you to do? Are you aware of times when you actually have victory in a battle even though the war is not over? Do you have a plan to make progress with ministry in your home, neighborhood, school, work, church, etc.? Well I hope that you agree with Nehemiah that God deserves the credit for any success, but you have a responsibility to make plans to finish even if you have to make some radical changes. We must be prepared to adjust, change strategies, reorganize & make necessary sacrifices because our adversaries are relentless even though they cannot win. They will continue with all their cunning & resources, so we must remain alert as we progress – watch & work. Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd & He is leading us; we must stay close to Him in prayer, communion, meditation, faithfulness & obedience. Remember the lessons we have learned in this battle & press on to the next one. Victory belongs to Christ & to us!

And if you are not a Christian, you have a major battle to fight against sin also. But you cannot begin to fight until you become a soldier for Christ who is set free from slavery to sin. So you must first believe in Jesus, pray & ask God to forgive your sins. Will you trust Him & believe today?

SUBJECT: [Watch and Work](#)

TEXT: [Nehemiah 4:15-23](#)

LOCATION: [Trinity Community Church](#)

DATE: [October 21, 2012](#)

OCASSION: [Sunday Morning Worship Svc](#)

SERMON INDEX NUMBER: [1017](#)

FILE LOCATION: [Computer Sermons 4Q12](#)

[Prepared by Willie D. Woodmore](#)