

Enemy at the Gate

By John Malham • Study download 4

SESSION 4 — CHAPTERS 11-15

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Building and Battling / The Armor / The Cornerstone

Theme: Nehemiah held a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. That is the life.

READ FIRST — Open your Bible to these passages before continuing.

Nehemiah 4:17-18

"They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."

Building and battling are not separate seasons. They are the same life, happening simultaneously. You do not get to put down one until the wall is finished. The wall is never finished.

Ephesians 6:13-17

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Six pieces. Every one has a function. The enemy knows which one you have left off. Put on the whole armor — not the pieces that feel comfortable, not the ones you remember on Sundays. All of it. Every day.

1 Corinthians 3:11

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Everything you are building — your family, your faith, your work, your legacy — is either built on this foundation or it is built on something that will not hold the weight of the storm that is coming.

THE TEACHING

In Nehemiah 4, the workers rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem did something that has no parallel in any other construction project in history: they held a tool in one hand and a

weapon in the other. They built and battled simultaneously. They did not get to choose between the two. The gate was half-finished, the rubble was still everywhere, and the enemies were circling — and the work had to keep going. This is not a metaphor for some future season of your life. This is the description of your life right now. Building and battling are not separate activities. They are the same life.

The great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1) were real people — not legends, not metaphors — who fought real battles in real time and held. Abraham, who waited 25 years for a son. Moses, who led a complaining nation for 40 years. Rahab, a prostitute in a condemned city, who tied a scarlet cord in her window and staked everything on a promise. David, who wrote psalms in caves. They are not distant heroes. They are a testimony. They are saying: we stood here before you. It is possible. The wall can hold. You are not the first man to stand in this place, and you will not be the last.

The armor of God in Ephesians 6:13-18 is not metaphor. Belt of truth — the first piece, because everything else hangs on it. If your foundation of truth is loose, nothing else will hold. Breastplate of righteousness — protecting the heart, the seat of your desires and affections. Shoes of the gospel of peace — you move with purpose, not panic. Shield of faith — raised against the fiery darts of accusation and doubt. Helmet of salvation — the mind protected by the knowledge of who you are in Christ. Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God — the only offensive weapon in the list. Six pieces. Not optional. Not decorative. Put on the whole armor, because the enemy knows exactly which piece you have left off.

The cornerstone is Jesus Christ. Everything else either builds from Him or collapses without Him. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. The storms described in Matthew 7:24-27 hit both houses — the one built on rock and the one built on sand. The difference is not whether the storm comes. The storm always comes. The difference is what is underneath when it does. You are building something right now. The only question is what you are building it on.

- Nehemiah's workers held a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. Building and battling are not separate seasons — they are the same life, happening simultaneously.
- The great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12 were real people who stood where you are standing and held. You are not the first. The wall can hold.
- The armor of God is not optional or decorative. Six pieces — and the enemy knows exactly which one you have left off.
- The cornerstone is Christ. Both houses in Matthew 7 were hit by the same storm. The difference is not whether the storm comes — it is what is underneath when it arrives.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." — Ephesians 6:13

1. What are you building right now — in your family, your faith, your work, your community? What are you defending at the same time? Are you doing both, or have you been doing only one?

2. Which piece of the armor of God are you currently least equipped with? What would it mean to put that piece on — not symbolically, but practically, this week?
3. Who is in your great cloud of witnesses — the people whose faith has marked the path ahead of you? Who showed you it was possible to stand?
4. What do you want to pass on? Not financially — what conviction, what character, what faith do you want the generation behind you to inherit from your life?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Write a letter to the person who comes after you — your child, a younger man, someone you may never meet. What do you want them to know about the battle you have fought and the God who held you in it?

Prayer and next step

What will you put into practice before your next meeting? Who will you pray for?
