

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Facing Opposition – 19-25 October 2019

Christ would have us know that God (the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ) is the strength of His people. Of ancient Israel rebuilding the temple amid opposition, it is written: “But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this *matter*” (Ezra 5:5). And so Moses, in “the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel,” said: “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them” (Deuteronomy 33:1, 26-27). When we read: “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9), it is a comfort to know that God is omnipotent. When we pray saying, “Hallowed be Thy name,” and we remember it is a fearful name, what an encouragement to be assured that “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

Sunday: Opposition Begins – In Ezra 4:1-5 we note that the “adversaries” of Israel offered to ‘help’ the remnant Israel to rebuild the temple, but the faithful Israel refused. What is the response of modern remnant Israel to the offer of modern adversaries? Few years ago, our church decided to make a movie (“*tell the world*”) to ‘rebuild the temple’ and evangelise the world. In making of this movie, our church accepted the help of non-church movie-actors. As one looks at the actors who starred in the church-film, it is alarming! The film that the woman who played Ellen White starred in before she did that church-film was called *Bitten* – wherein is an image of her being demon possessed in that film. Did the making of the film *Tell the World* convince this woman that she needed to give her life to Christ and stop doing what she did before? It appears not. The movie she was involved in after *Tell the World* is called *How to plan an Orgy in a small Town*. Do not demonic spirits that inspire these actors have as much claim to ownership of the church-film as our church? Think how easily we may rationalize that the actors were just servants and that the spirit that attends them will not affect the movie. Can we be that naïve? Can we ignore that each person has a spirit that controls their life either good or bad? What does the Bible say? “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). This is besides the whole principle of movies. What is the counsel on using movies? Ellen White, of whom our church brought into the Camp a modern Moabite (see Numbers 25) demon-possessed woman to play her part, says: “I have a message for those in charge of our work. Do not encourage the men who are to engage in this work to think that they must proclaim the solemn, sacred message in a theatrical style. Not one jot or tittle of anything theatrical is to be brought into our work. God’s cause is to have a sacred, heavenly mold. Let everything connected with the giving of the message for this time bear the divine impress. Let nothing of a theatrical nature be permitted, for this would spoil the sacredness of the work” {DPSDAI 20.3}.

Monday: Prophets Encourage – In Ezra 1:1-4 we notice that Cyrus, the Persian king, provided the opportunity for the Jews to return from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild God’s temple. The work started, but Samaritan opposition blocked all significant progress for many years. At that time God raised two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the completion of the work. Haggai and Zechariah sought to revive the work. The two prophets’ work was complementary. Haggai reproved the people for their failure to rebuild the temple, while Zechariah encouraged the people by presenting to them the coming glory of the Lord. It was a time that the people had put their earthly interest first before heavenly interests.

Tuesday: Work Stoppage – We learn from the book of Ezra that the people of God who at the command of the Persian king had gone to Jerusalem to build the temple, became much discouraged on account of the opposition brought to bear against them, and abandoned the work for several years. Added to this opposition was a severe drought, which cut off their crops, depriving them of even the necessaries of life. Of course under the circumstances they could not be expected to give time and means for the building of the temple, and they

very naturally concluded that the time had not come for the Lord's house to be built (Haggai 1:2); for, they doubtless reasoned, 'if the Lord wanted his house built now, he would give us the means with which to do it.' "Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:3-6). Then the Lord gives the cause of this terrible want: "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land" (verses 9-11). Read also chapter 2:11-19.

Wednesday: Nehemiah Takes Action (444 b.c.) – Great opposition from the enemies was upon Israel when rebuilding the temple. Nehemiah encouraged the builders to build whilst at the same time fighting the enemies. This 'fighting' was done by the Lord, for Nehemiah says, "Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses. Our God will fight for us" (Nehemiah 4:13-14, 19-20). What temple are we rebuilding today and how do we 'fight' off the enemies? Our bodies are the temples of God, and as such are to be under the direct control of the Spirit of God. God Himself is to quicken (make alive) our mortal bodies by His indwelling Spirit (see Romans 8:11). The Spirit is to supply all the life that we have – that is, the life of Jesus is to be manifested in our mortal flesh. This means health, for we read: "My son, attend to My words; incline thine ear to My sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and *health to all their flesh*" (Proverbs 4:20-22). How do we 'fight' the spiritual battles by the Lord, against bad habits, perverted appetite, and sin in general? In the 'fight' against sin, one fundamental principle is self-forgetfulness. The only thing we need deliverance from is sin; when we have that, we have everything worth having, both in this world and in the world to come. We know that Jesus was delivered from our sin, for "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death," He "was heard" (Hebrews 5:7). Although in the flesh, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3), as weak as the weakest man that ever lived, for no man can be weaker than to be able to do nothing of himself (see John 5:30), – yet He was delivered from all our sins of our flesh. But, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." This was true of Christ on the cross. The same must be true of us; and the same spirit of absorbed interest in others, and self-forgetfulness, must be in even our most earnest prayer for personal help, if we would pray the prayer that is certain to be answered. When we come to the throne of grace absorbed in the thought that it is Jesus who is pleading to be delivered from the sins that so beset us, that it is He and not we who appear before God, and we lose thought of ourselves in our interest in His being satisfied with the travail of His soul bearing our sin, then we are saved. Our personality is lost in His; we lose ourselves in Him; and then comes the thrilling thought, He was heard! He gained victory over this very trial! Human words cannot describe the joy of the thought, for it is "the joy of the Lord", which is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Thursday: Doing a "Great Work" – The Lesson to draw from Nehemiah is this: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Neh. 6:3" {CC 268.1}. "Nehemiah was chosen by God because he was willing to cooperate with the Lord as a restorer... When he saw wrong principles being acted upon, he did not stand by as an onlooker, and by his silence give consent. He did not leave the people to conclude that he was standing on the wrong side. He took a firm, unyielding stand for the right" {CC 268.2}. "Every device that the prince of darkness can suggest will be employed to induce God's servants to form a confederacy with the agents of Satan.... Like Nehemiah, they should steadfastly reply, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.' God's workers may safely keep on with their work, letting their efforts refute the falsehoods that malice may coin for their injury. Like the builders on the walls of Jerusalem they must refuse to be diverted from their work by threats or mockery." {CC 268.3}.