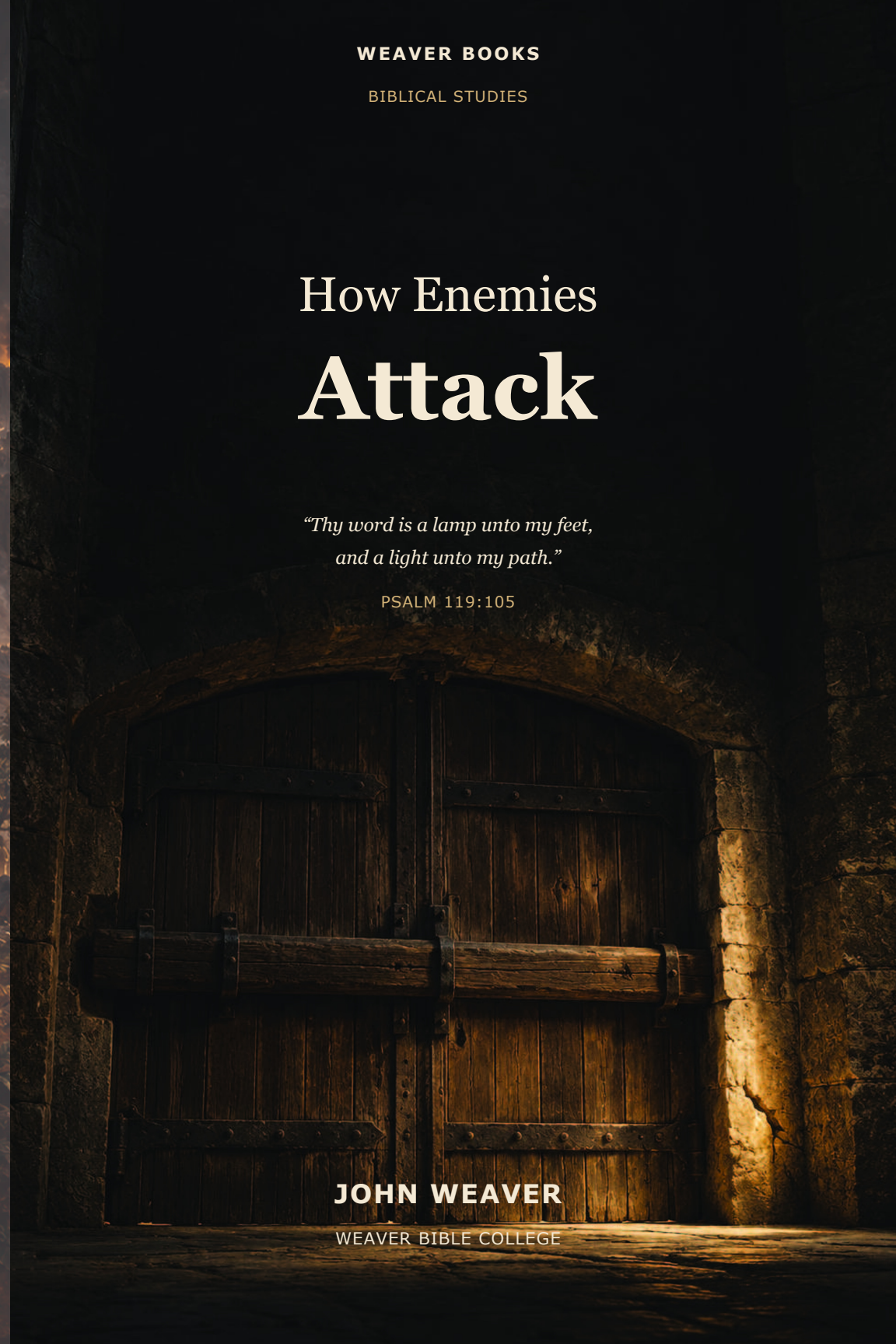
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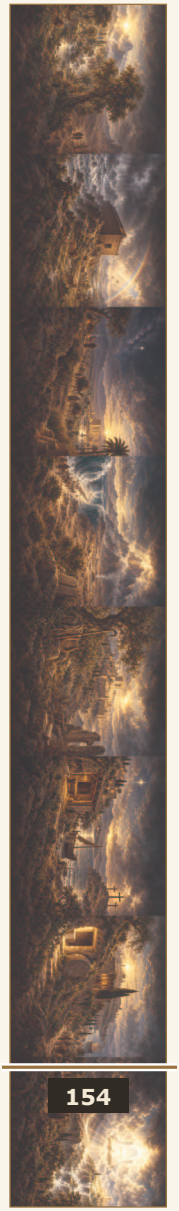
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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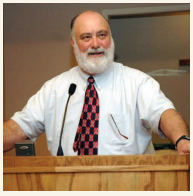
Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:11

Opposition does not always begin with open hostility. Drawing on biblical examples, John Weaver examines compromise, false accusation, and coercion as means of undermining faithfulness. These messages call for discernment, integrity, and obedience when apparent assistance threatens to bring God's people under a competing authority.

"Our enemies always attack us first by seeking to get us to compromise, in order that they may corrupt us and control us."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

How Enemies Attack

Part One of Two

I am going to be preaching a message today that I will finish next week, Lord willing, and the week after I will be away. When I return, I have a message that I want to share with you. The message that I am going to bring, Lord willing, on the 13th of March is "The Rebel's Prayer." Perhaps you can do a little thinking on that and see if you can come up with the text that I am going to use. I will explain that when we get there.

Today we are going to be looking at Ezra chapter 4, and the title of the message for this week and next week is "How Enemies Attack," or, as a subtitle, "How the Work of God Is Corrupted." Interestingly enough, Henry was telling me that he woke up this morning at 4 o'clock with something on his mind, and the message that I am going to bring today and next week will fit right in with what Henry woke up and thought about this morning. Maybe after I get through preaching, he will be able to sleep until at least six the next several mornings before he wakes up and thinks about the subject again.

"Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Yeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them, You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God. But we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us."

Introduction: Identifying the True Enemies

I want you to stop and think about how enemies attack. Everyone has enemies. Often people become our enemies simply because of our own lack of communication, lack of respect, misinterpretations, saying things the wrong way, and sometimes for a lack of common decency. Those are our enemies, and by that I mean they are our enemies because they are enemies of our own making. They were not necessarily enemies previously, but they are enemies now simply because of our ignorance and our conduct.

All of us are sinners and consequently we do that which sinners do most frequently: we sin. We are not perfect, and we cannot be perfect in this life. Therefore, there are times when each of us irritates, upsets, and angers others, and they become our enemies simply because of our sins. However, we may be reconciled to these enemies through repentance and forgiveness, and they once again become our friends.

But those are not the type of enemies that I am talking about today. The enemies that I am referring to today are those who are our enemies simply because we are Christians, simply because we belong to Christ, and because they are the enemies of Christ and the gospel. I want you to hold Ezra 4, because we will be expounding that passage momentarily. But look in your Bibles to the book of John, chapter 15. These are exactly the type of enemies that I am going to be talking about today.

In John 15, beginning with verse 18, our Lord says, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were

of the world, the world would love his own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord."

He continues, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will also keep yours." Notice that our Lord says, If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you. In other words, it hates us because it hates Jesus Christ. If the world persecuted Jesus Christ, then He said, rest assured, they are going to try to persecute you as well.

Without turning there, in 1 John 3 and verse 13, John also wrote, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." He says, Do not be surprised. In fact, turn in your Bibles to 1 John, chapter 2, and notice, beginning with verse 15, another statement: "Love not the world."

The World System Defined

When he talks about loving not the world, he is not referring to his creation. He is certainly not referring to the world of Christians. He is referring to the world system and everything that is opposed to him, just as he said in John 15, "If the world hate you." He is referring to the world of the ungodly. So he says, "Love not the world. Neither the things that are in the world. If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Now he tells you which world he is talking about: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world that is that type of world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

God Knows His Enemies

Let me put it very plainly. We have enemies. Our Lord has enemies. We may not know who all of the enemies of the Lord are, but you may rest assured of one thing: he knows exactly who his enemies are. Psalm 21:8 says, referring to God, "Thine hand shall find out all

thine enemies. Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee." We may not know who God's enemies are, but God does.

There are many times when individuals present themselves as friends of Christ and friends of God's people, when in reality they are nothing less than spies, and nothing less than individuals who have infiltrated to wreak havoc and ruin. Inevitably, those who are the enemies of God will display their hatred of God by attacking either the messengers of God or the work of God.

Before considering the message from Ezra, turn to the book of Jeremiah. Begin with Jeremiah 18, because this will be seen not only this week, but, Lord willing, next week as well. Oftentimes, the enemies of Christ attack the work of God exactly the way they attack the messengers of God.

What happened to Jeremiah? Of course, Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He preached to a people who did not want to hear. They did not want to listen, and they did not want to repent. So they attacked Jeremiah first of all verbally. Jeremiah 18:18 says, "Then said they, Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words."

Pattern of Attack on God's Messengers: Jeremiah

They said, "We're not going to listen to him. We will smite him with the tongue. We will verbally abuse him. We will verbally attack him." They attacked him verbally, and that did not stop Jeremiah from preaching, although they said, "Let us not give heed to any of his words."

Since the verbal attacks did not stop him, they went a step farther. The reference was first given as Jeremiah 19:10, but that was a bad verse. It must have been Jeremiah 20. Jeremiah 20:10 says, "For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge upon him."

Note what they say: “Report, say they, and we will report it.” In other words, they would report him to the authorities and stop him. Their verbal attacks did not stop him, but they would report him to the authorities.

Jeremiah was first verbally abused. Perhaps they thought, “Maybe they can handle him.” Then Jeremiah was reported to the authorities. Since verbal abuse and reporting him did not necessarily stop him, they threw him in prison, so to speak. Jeremiah 38:6 records what they did: “Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison. And they let down Jeremiah with cords, and in the dungeon there was no water but mire. So Jeremiah sunk in the mire.” They were going to stop him one way or the other.

First of all, they said, “We’re not going to listen to him; we’ll attack him verbally.” Then they said, “We’re going to report him,” but that was not going to stop him. Now they put him in prison; they put him in a dungeon. And guess what? That still did not stop Jeremiah.

Jeremiah had an amanuensis, that is, a scribe, by the name of Baruch. From the dungeon, Jeremiah spoke the words of God, Baruch wrote them down, and then Baruch went to the temple and read them. Thus, even though Jeremiah himself was in a dungeon, the words of God continued to go forth through the ministry of Baruch.

Here was the ultimate solution: “So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah saying, As the Lord liveth that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee in hand of these men that seek thy life.” There were men seeking to kill Jeremiah simply because he was preaching and teaching the truth.

The reason for pointing this out is that these tactics used against the messengers of God are often used against the work of God as well. The main aim of the enemies of God is always to stop, thwart, hinder, and overthrow the work of God. This is the aspect I want to deal with. In Ezra 4:1, we find this interesting introduction: “Now, when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children

of the captivity builded the temple of the Lord God of Israel," notice that he begins by calling them adversaries.

Enemies Attack by Compromise

Ezra 4:1-3: The Adversaries' Offer

The word "adversaries" here literally means an enemy, a foe, an oppressor, an adversary, one who is against. All these people coming to Zerubbabel, to Yeshua, and the chief of the fathers are enemies, oppressors, and adversaries; they are against the people of God.

Verse 2 says, "Then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers and said unto them, Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither."

Here is the first way the enemies always attack: they seek to corrupt by compromise. These people have already been identified as the enemies of God's people, yet they come and say, "Let us build with you. For we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither."

Stop and think for a moment. Ezra is concerned with rebuilding the temple. There were a limited number of individuals who returned with both Ezra and Nehemiah. Consequently, those who returned from the captivity were undoubtedly short on what we would call cash and materials. Moreover, they were few in number, and help was obviously needed. So here are people coming to the builders of the temple and saying, "We worship your God the way you do. We seek him."

"Let us build with you." Here is an offer for help from people who profess to be believers.

What would be the answer of the modern-day preacher and the modern-day church? "Wow, they say they're Christians too. Let's take them in. We can use them. They'll help us build the work. We'll have more money. We can enlarge our building program. We can get a new sound system. We can do all of these things." Moreover, even if they are not genuinely saved, that really does not matter, because

we can use this as a means of evangelism. As we use them in the work and work with them, we will witness to them. Is that not the idea of the modern-day church and modern-day preaching? In other words, the attitude of the modern-day church is this: They will help us build a great work.

But who were these people described as the adversaries? And how did Zerubbabel and Yeshua know that they were not genuine and true believers? Zerubbabel, of course, turned them down.

Historical Background of the Samaritans

The northern kingdom was defeated by the Assyrian Empire in 722 BC, and they were carried away into captivity. In 2 Kings 17:5-6 we read: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. And in the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and Habor by the rivers of Gozan and the cities of the Medes."

It took him three years to besiege it. He depopulated the area of the northern Israelites and took them away into Assyria. But that was not all. After he had taken the Israelites out of the land, verse 24 says: "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel."

Not every Israelite was taken out of the land; the poor were left there. All these heathen possessed Samaria and dwelt in its cities. At the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the Lord, the one true and living God. Therefore, the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of them. They said to the king of Assyria, “The nations, which thou hast removed and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land.” Isn’t that an amazing statement? They did not understand the omnipresence of God, because every heathen had his local gods, and those gods were only over a certain area.

Therefore, the king sent lions among them, and they slew them because they did not know the manner of the God of the land. In

verse 26, the king of Assyria commanded that one of the priests whom they had brought from Samaria be sent to dwell there and teach them the manner of the God of the land. They thought the problem was that these people did not know the manner of the local God. The priest was to teach them how they should fear the Lord.

Remember why God took Israel into captivity into Assyria to begin with: because of idolatry. Do you remember the two calves at Dan and Bethel that Jeroboam had made, and how Israel was worshiping those golden calves? Then one of the priests carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the Lord. This was the proposed answer to their failure to fear God.

How effective was his teaching? Every nation made gods of their own and put them in the houses of the high places, which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt. The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth; the men of Cuth made Nergal; the men of Hamath made Ashima; the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. They had been taught the manner of the God of the land, yet continued in their own idolatry.

"So they feared the Lord." Watch this: "So they feared the Lord and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places." That is for those golden calves. Verse 33 says, "They feared the Lord and served their own gods after the men of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners." Here is the final conclusion: "They feared not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, nor after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel."

These Samaritans were a mixed breed. The very mention of Esarhaddon takes us back to Ezra, chapter 4, verse 2: "Then came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers and said unto them, Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria." Esarhaddon reigned from 681 to 668 BC. The Samaritans were

talking about something that had taken place at least 130 years previously.

There had been at least three colonizations in Samaria by the kings of Assyria. The first is mentioned in 2 Kings 17:24, which we just read. Later in his reign, Sargon added an Arabian element, and some thirty or forty years later, Esarhaddon, his grandson, augmented the population with people from the southeast parts of his kingdom. Thus, these Samaritans were mixed; they had anything and everything in them.

They came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers, already identified as adversaries, and said, “Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria.”

Zerubbabel's Refusal and the Principle of Separation

Yes, they sacrificed unto him to the golden calves, to the corruption and the perversion, but they also sacrificed to all their other gods as well, because the Lord God of heaven and earth was just another god to them. He was on a par, maybe, with their gods, but no greater. So they said, “We seek him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither.”

But Zerubbabel, and Yeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them, “You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God. But we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us.”

Note what he said to these adversaries: “You have nothing to do to build with us.” Here is the principle: the very first way the enemy always seeks to attack, whether it is a messenger or the work of God, is to corrupt by compromise. The work of God is not to be compromised by yoking up with the ungodly. The standards of the ungodly are not God’s standards. The thoughts of the ungodly are not God’s thoughts. The practices of the ungodly are not God’s practices.

As Christians, we are supposed to be biblicists—that is, people of the Word. The ungodly are not biblicists; they are pragmatists. They

do whatever works. They will add God to their sacrifice and worship if it will keep the lions off them. It is what worked, and they were happy with that.

How can the work of God be a pure work if it is corrupted and compromised with the heathen, with the pagan, and with unbiblical and ungodly practices? Paul teaches this same exact principle in 2 Corinthians chapter 6. Beginning with verse 14, he says, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” That is a good question. The answer is none. “Or what communion hath light with darkness?” The answer is none. “And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” or the devil? The answer is none. “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” The answer is none. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” The answer is none, for he says, “For you are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I'll be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty.”

He tells us that we are not to be unequally yoked together. This is exactly the same principle that Ezra is dealing with back in Ezra chapter 4. The work of God cannot be pure when it is corrupted and compromised with the heathen, the pagan, or with unbiblical and ungodly practices.

In 3rd John, beginning at verse 5, John writes: “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers, which have borne witness of thy charity before the church, whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.” He is encouraging the elder Gaius to bring certain of the brethren on their journey well. These brethren had borne witness of Gaius’s charity before the church, and he was doing faithfully what he did to the brethren and to strangers. Then, in verse 7, he says concerning these godly preachers, “Because that for his name's sake,” that is, for Christ's sake, “they went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles, we therefore to receive such that we might be

"Fellow helpers of the truth." They went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles, literally taking nothing of the nations or the unsaved. In other words, in the Bible, godly people do a godly work, and you do not corrupt or compromise that godly work by yoking up with unbelievers.

Modern Application: Faith-Based Initiatives

Which brings me to the application. It was President Bush who began what he called his faith-based initiatives, where the federal government was going to hook up with churches and religious organizations to do a greater good. What possible connection, help, or encouragement could a government that promotes sodomy, aborticide, fraud, Marxism, and communism, denies the sovereignty of God, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the authority of God's law, and promotes hundreds of other unbiblical attitudes and programs have toward a biblical understanding and a biblical work with people who really want to glorify God and honor Him according to the Word of God? What possible connection? And yet hundreds of preachers and churches flocked to the faith-based initiatives.

An article published on February 9, 2010, written by Todd J. Gillman of the Dallas Morning News, reported: "President Obama devoted much of his Thursday to faith. He spoke of his paths to Christianity at the National Prayer Breakfast," an annual rite observed by every predecessor since Dwight Eisenhower in 1953. He also established his own White House office dedicated to tapping the energy and goodness of the nation's faithful while observing those tricky church-state boundaries the founders set forth a couple of centuries back.

By the way, there are no paths to Christianity. You become a Christian by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. It is not a path; it is a work.

The article continued: "Faith has always been a guiding force in our family's life," he told a few thousand praying breakfasters at Hilton Ballroom. He quoted a Hadith from the Muslim Koran and a passage from the Jewish Torah to underscore his point about the universality of the Golden Rule. He gave approving shout-outs to Buddhists, Hindus, the followers of Confucius, and humanists. He

even recognized agnostics. He called religious and faith-based groups such as Catholic charities uniquely qualified to step in at a time of great need: “Few are closer to what's happening on our streets and in our neighborhoods as these organizations.”

Obama said at the breakfast, “People trust them, communities rely upon them, and we will help them.” After breakfast, Obama met in the Oval Office with a neglected group of fifteen religious leaders tapped to advise his White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, a rare idea from his predecessor that Obama had embraced. Critics complained that the Bush-era Office of Faith-Based Initiatives blurred the line between government and religion and was created to funnel tax dollars to church-run programs.

Groups critical of that office included the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and People for the American Way. They expressed disappointment in the Obama version, saying that by failing to repeal the Bush policies, the White House would allow participating religious groups to continue discrimination in hiring. Obama said he would review the rules that let churches discriminate in hiring, but the thrust was generally the same: getting help to the needy.

So what they were saying was this: those who dip into the governmental trough must hire sodomites, lesbians, transsexuals, pedophiles, and other perverts. In other words, if you are going to receive money from these faith-based initiatives, you are going to be controlled, corrupted, and compromised. You will do exactly what they tell you to do, or there is no money.

The Danger of Government Money

There is an old proverb: “Come shekels, come shackles.” Whenever the government gives shekels, you can mark it down: there are always shackles. The aim of the enemies of God is to entice and entrap God’s people into compromise, so that the work of God may not only be corrupted but controlled. The Samaritans worshiped all these false gods and tied this worship in with the worship of Jehovah, the one true God. They had a syncretistic religion; that is, they combined pagan worship with the worship of Jehovah. They

were willing to take Jehovah if they could knock Him down to the same size as their pagan gods—recognizing Him if they could manipulate and control Him.

Why did they want him to begin with? The lions were attacking them. They wanted him to take care of their lion problem. They would throw a few shekels and give a little sacrifice every now and then. They thought, “We can control him. We can get him to do what we want him to do by simply sacrificing to him every now and then.”

With all this background in mind, look at Ezra chapter 4. Verse 1 says, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin came.” Watch what they said when they came: “Then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers and said unto him, Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us up hither.” But Zerubbabel and Yeshua and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them, “You have nothing to do with us.”

That is almost exactly what Peter told Simon the sorcerer in Acts chapter 8. When Simon wanted to buy the power of the Holy Ghost, Peter said, “You have neither part nor lot in this matter.” In other words, “You have nothing to do with it.”

Was Zerubbabel being too hard, too rough, too ungracious, or too unkind when he said, “You have nothing to do with us”? No. What was he saying? He was saying, “You’re heathen. You’re pagans. We don’t worship the way you worship. We don’t believe like you believe. We have nothing in common.”

Jesus Confirms the Samaritan Error

To prove he was right, consider the woman at the well in John chapter 4. Do you remember that she was a Samaritan? “And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.”

"Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well. And it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. And Jesus said

unto her," and you know the whole conversation. Skip down to verse 19. The woman gets religious upon Him: "The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," that is, Samaria, "and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father."

Watch what He tells her: "You worship you know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews," or the Judahites, because that is where the temple was, where the tabernacle was, where the law was, and where the teaching priests were. "You worship you know not what." You do not know who or what you are worshiping. You are pagans. Our Lord simply confirmed what Zerubbabel said.

Now go back to Ezra chapter 4, verse 3: "But Zerubbabel and Yeshua, the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God." Let us finish it: "But we ourselves together will build unto the Lord our God of Israel as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us." It was Cyrus who let the people go back and rebuild. Zerubbabel was saying, You have no part in this. We are the ones who love Him, worship Him, and recognize Him. We will build the temple ourselves, by His grace and power, and do whatever needs to be done. You may not participate with us in any way whatsoever.

If Zerubbabel and the fathers believed it would be a corrupt compromise to allow the heathen and pagans to build with them, worship with them, and ultimately corrupt or control the temple, would not the same principle apply today to the Church of Jesus Christ? Yes. If the heathen had come in and built, and if it took $20 million to build that temple and the heathen put in $15 million, who do you think would control the temple?

How has the Church of Jesus Christ corrupted itself, compromised itself, and put itself in a position where the heathen can control the work and worship of God? Here are my two questions.

Church Incorporation and 501(c)(3) Status

Have you ever heard of church incorporation and the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status? Let me say something first. Do you realize that, in reality and in truth, the Church of Jesus Christ is really the only true incorporation? The word “incorporation” actually means the body continues. Truly, it is only the church, through divine grace, power, and mercy, that has been given eternal life. We will continue; the body will continue. If we have reality, why would we need artificiality?

Did you know that a corporation is an artificial entity? It is not real. It is a legal fiction. It only exists in legal land. I want to give you two definitions. The first is from the 1839 Bouvier’s Law Dictionary. Defining “corporation,” it says: “An artificial being created by law and composed by individuals who subsist as a body politic under a special denomination with the capacity of perpetual succession and of acting within the scope of its charter as a natural person.” But it begins, “an artificial being.” It is not real. It is a fiction.

Here is the Free Dictionary. Listen carefully now. This is very important: “An organization formed with state governmental approval to act as an artificial person to carry on business or other activities which can sue or be sued and unless it is a non-profit can issue shares of stock to raise funds with which to start a business or increase capital.” Notice the words, “an organization formed with state governmental approval to act as an artificial person.”

Do you know what an artificial dog is? It is a stuffed animal. It is not real. Linda has a real dog—well, such as it is. I am teasing. But listen: I am going to read a Supreme Court case, just two paragraphs, Hale versus Hinkle. I want you to listen to what the Supreme Court says is the distinction between a natural person, or a real person, and a corporation.

If we as a church are real, genuine people and individuals, having a real existence already, why would we need an artificial existence? In Supreme Court, Hale versus Hinkle, the Court stated: "The individual may stand upon his constitutional rights as a citizen. He's entitled to carry on his private business in his own way. His power to contract is unlimited. He owes no duty to the state or to his

neighbors to divulge his business or to open his doors to an investigation so far as it may tend to criminate him. He owes no such duty to the state since he receives nothing therefrom beyond the protection of life and property."

"His rights are such as existed by the law of the land long antecedent to the organization of the state and can only be taken from him by due process of law in accordance with the Constitution. Among his rights are a refusal to incriminate himself and the immunity of himself and his property from arrest or seizure except under warrant of the law. He owes nothing to the public so long as he does not trespass upon their rights." As an individual, as a real life, living, genuine person, I have rights.

The Supreme Court continued: "Upon the other hand, the corporation is a creature of the state. It is presumed to be incorporated for the benefit of the public. It receives special privileges and franchises and holds them subject to the laws of the state and the limitations of its charter. Its powers are limited by law. It can make no contract not authorized by its charter. Its rights to act as a corporation are preserved to it so long as it obeys the laws of its creation."

"There is a reserved right in the legislature to investigate its contracts and to find out whether it has exceeded its powers. It would be a strange anomaly to hold that a state having chartered a corporation to make use of certain franchises could not, in the exercise of its sovereignty, inquire how these franchises have been employed and whether they had been abused and demand the production of the corporate books and papers for that purpose." So what does the Supreme Court say about a corporation?

First of all, it is an artificial entity. It is a creature of the state. You receive certain privileges and rights, but you are controlled, and the state has the absolute right to come in and demand to see your books and papers. Once you incorporate as a church, you become a governmentally approved church, with the state as your head. Everything you do is subject to the laws of the state because your existence is now determined by the state. You lose any and all constitutional protection, and you are bound—bound to obey the laws, rules, and regulations of your creator, the state.

Let me give you an illustration. The State Street Baptist Church was founded in 1844. It existed 129 years without incorporating, until 1973. After it incorporated, a dispute arose over church discipline. Those who were dissatisfied went to court and sued the church. The church's position was that the government had no right to interfere; this was church business and did not relate to the government. In Hollins versus Edmonds, which went all the way to the Court of Appeals in Kentucky, the court said, "Once the church determined to enter into the realm of Caesar by forming a corporation, it was required to abide by the rules of Caesar, or in this case, the statutes of the Commonwealth of Kentucky."

You lived 129 years without being incorporated. Now you have incorporated, and the court said, once you entered into the realm of Caesar, we have you. You must abide by the laws, rules, and regulations we give you. In Gibson versus Munson, here is what the court ruled: "The church, any church, has the absolute unfettered right to worship according to the dictates of their own consciences,

“So long as they do not trespass upon the rights of others. Having elected to incorporate under the laws of the state, they should be required to conform to the consequences of their voluntary act. Incorporating obviously was not done for the reasons of religious belief.” Once you incorporate, you are obligated, duty bound, to obey the laws of the state.

If the laws of Jesus Christ conflict with the laws of the state, since the state is now your head and your creator, whose law comes first? In the corporation, the state law comes first. The churches not only got corrupted and compromised through incorporation; they got further corrupted and compromised through obtaining a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS.

Now listen to what IRS Publication 557 states: “Churches. Although a church, its integrated auxiliaries, or a convention or association of churches is not required to file a 1023 to be exempt from federal income taxes or to receive tax deductible contributions.”

Did you hear what I read? The IRS says a church is not required to obtain any type of tax exemption in order to receive tax deductible

contributions. Why? Because it is a church. The government does not have any power or authority over the church.

"Although a church, its integrated auxiliaries, or a convention or association of churches is not required to file Form 1023 to be exempt from federal income tax or to receive tax-deductible contributions, the organization may find it advantageous to obtain recognition of exemption." If you do not need it, why would you find it advantageous to get it? Unless you want governmental approval and governmental control.

The publication continues: "In this event," that is, if you decide you want this advantage of being a governmentally controlled church, "you should submit information showing that your organization is a church, synagogue, association or convention of churches, religious order, religious organization, that is an integral part of a church, and that is engaged in carrying out the functions of a church." In other words, you have to prove your church. "In determining whether an admittedly religious organization is also a church, the IRS does not accept every assertion that an organization is a church."

Because beliefs and practices vary so widely, there is no single definition of the word "church" for tax purposes. The IRS considers the facts and circumstances of each organization applying for church status. To determine whether an organization meets the religious purposes test for Section 501(c)(3), the IRS maintains two basic guidelines. If you want 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, you must acknowledge and submit to these guidelines in order to be approved.

First, "the particular religious beliefs of the organization are truly and sincerely held." Who is going to argue with that? I do not care if you are a pagan; whatever you believe, you ought to believe sincerely and genuinely. You may be sincerely and genuinely wrong, but you can be sincere in your error.

Second, "the practices and rituals associated with the organization's religious belief or creed are not illegal or contrary to clearly defined public policy." Sodomy is public policy in this country. Abortion is public policy. Marxism is public policy. Socialism is public policy. When you sign to receive 501(c)(3)

tax-exempt status, you are agreeing that you will not oppose any clearly defined public policy.

The IRS further states that a group may not qualify as an exempt religious organization for tax purposes if its actions, as contrasted with its beliefs, are contrary to well-established and clearly defined public policy. If there is a clear showing that the beliefs or doctrines are sincerely held by those professing them, the IRS will not question the religious nature of those beliefs. In other words, it says, "We won't question your religious nature. But if you preach contrary to our public policies, you are not getting our approval." This came from the website irs.gov; go there and read it for yourself.

The point I am making is simple: the churches as a whole in America are so entangled, corrupted, and compromised that it is impossible for them to be free and live under the Lordship and Headship of Jesus Christ. I have had preachers tell me, "Well, they start telling me what I can and cannot preach; I am going to draw my line in the sand." They already told you what you can and cannot preach when you received 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and agreed to it. They already told you what you could and could not do when you incorporated and agreed to it. What it boils down to is this: either Jesus Christ is Head of the church, or the state is head of the church.

Conclusion: Call for Uncompromised Pulpits

Our Lord said it very clearly in Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or else he'll hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." No man can serve two masters. We need today a whole host of Zerubbabels who will say to the heathen, "No, you shall not build with us. You have neither part nor lot in this matter." We're not going to be corrupted. We're not going to be compromised.

What Winston Churchill said about Americans could be said concerning Christians with equal authority: "Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing after they've tried everything else." Christians can be counted on to do the right thing too, after they've tried everything else and suffered the judgment of God. Then

we wake up and learn. Once we get a good dose of the rod of judgment, we think, “We might better start doing things biblically.”

Think about this. If Jehovah God is the God of Israel, He is not the God of those whom Esarhaddon sent into the land. If Jesus Christ is our head, if Jesus Christ is our God, and if His law is our supreme authority, then those who worship government and obey government more than God, more than our Lord Jesus Christ, do not belong to Him. For our Lord said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Our Lord said, “Why call you Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I said unto you?”

There is a difference. What Ezra was doing is what Paul demanded in 2 Corinthians. What John said is that there must be a difference, and we must keep and maintain that difference without compromise. If the God of the Bible is true, the god of government is false. Our enemies always attack us first by seeking to get us to compromise, in order that they may corrupt us and control us.

A compromised ministry is a corrupted ministry, and a compromised ministry is always a controlled ministry. Where are our Zerubbabels today? Where are the pastors in the pulpit who say, “We’re fed up with this stuff. If we want our country back, we must get our pulpits back. We must come once again under the full authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word”?

For He only is God, and beside Him there are no others.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace, Your mercy, and Your kindness to us. Lord, I pray that You would help us not to corrupt or compromise ourselves. Those churches and pastors that have done so, I pray that You would convict them, dear Lord, enlighten them, illuminate them, lead them, give them mercy, and show them Your Word and Your will. Then give them grace to repent, renounce their corruptions, and serve You and You only in an unfettered and free ministry, acknowledging only Jesus Christ as Lord and Jesus Christ as Head. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

How Enemies Attack

Part Two of Two

Review of Part 1: Corruption by Compromise

In Ezra chapter 4, beginning with verse 1, we read: “Now, when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity built the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, ‘Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. And we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither.’ But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them, ‘You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.’ Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even in the reign of Darius, king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the

beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem."

The rest of the chapter will be read momentarily. This is not necessarily speaking of our personal enemies, but of the enemies of Christ in particular. Our Lord said in John 15, verses 18 through 20: "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own. But because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they've kept my saying, they'll keep your saying also."

Our Lord is teaching us that hatred, persecution, and attacks arise simply because of the invented hatred of the ungodly toward Christ and the gospel. We looked particularly at the first three verses and noted that the very first method of attack normally used is that the work of God, the people of God, and the messengers of God are tempted to be corrupted by compromise.

In verse 2, they came to Zerubbabel, to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do, and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither." The temptation must have been great for Zerubbabel and those individuals, because they would have had additional monies, additional help, and the respect of the community, because everyone would have been working together. But these people were downright pagans, as I proved last week; all you have to do is read 2 Kings chapter 17. Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel answered correctly in verse 3: "You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us."

Here was a temptation to corrupt the ministry, the work of God, through compromise. Last week I drew the analogy that, where they may have failed in corrupting the temple at this particular point, the corruption is actually carried forth in our day through what we know as church incorporation and the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Once

you analyze those, not only in light of Scripture but in light of just simply the law itself, you will find that we have basically sold our birthright for a mess of government pottage.

We have silenced ourselves because, by obtaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, we have agreed in principle not to speak against public policy. May I remind you that, in this country, abortion, sodomy, fraud, socialism, Marxism, and a number of other sins are public policy. If you would read IRS Publication 557, you will find indeed that when you sign for that tax-exempt status, you are agreeing not to speak against public policy. Now, incidentally, there are godly men today, and several institutes, that help churches unincorporate and rid themselves of the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

Peter Kershaw is a paralegal and a Christian. He has written two wonderful books. One is entitled "Hush Money," and its cover shows a preacher with a piece of duct tape over his mouth. The book shows what happens when you incorporate and receive 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. His second book, entitled "In Caesar's Grip," is much larger and thicker. It documents not only all the legal cases, but scriptural principles as well. Dr. Greg Dixon also has a biblical law seminar, where he and other men help churches unincorporate. There are a lot of helps in this area, and the sin of incorporation and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status has been brought to light numerous times.

But let me say this: the first point I emphasized last week was that usually the first attack is an attempt to corrupt by compromise. Unhappily, our enemies usually do not have to go any further, because we are so willing to please anyone and everyone except our Lord Jesus Christ that we are willing to compromise. Usually, we are so devoid of biblical principles and biblical understanding that we fall for every snare and trap laid out by the enemy.

Second Attack: Control by Complications

But let me go a little further today and ask the question: suppose the work of God is not corrupted by compromise, and compromise fails. What is the next step? Look back in your Bibles, beginning with verse 4. We will read through verse 6. The second step, when the enemies cannot corrupt by compromise, is that they always try to

control by complications. Verse 4 says, "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even in the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem."

If one will not compromise with the enemies of Christ, then the enemies of Christ will do everything they can to complicate the work so that it will be weakened, delayed, hindered, thwarted, and ultimately have to cease of necessity because of all those complications. Notice that the Bible says in verse 4, "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah."

The word “weakened” refers to the fact that they made the people faint, slack, disheartened, and discouraged. In other words, they developed the attitude, “Why should we keep trying? Why should we do this anymore? Why should we go on?” But notice another word used in verse 4: “Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building.” The word “troubled” refers to the enemies’ endeavor to disturb, alarm, terrify, make anxious, and make the people nervous and afraid in order to cause the work to cease.

How did they accomplish their mission, and how do enemies accomplish their mission today? Notice verse 5. First of all, they hired legal counsel against the children of Judah: “And hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even into the reign of Darius, king of Persia.” To say that they hired legal counsel against them is putting it in the best light. The worst light is simply this: They resorted to bribery. They bribed these individuals.

The strategy here is a very common strategy known as lawyer delay. It is possible for you to have a case in court and continue to delay that case for years. Not just by getting continuances, but through other tricks of the trade as well. These enemies knew that, and they were going to frustrate the work by trying to drag it out, delay it, and thwart the work of God.

Their counselors were either to advise or persuade the officers of the king of Persia not to supply Zerubbabel and the company with money and/or supplies. Moreover, they did everything they could to get the edict to rebuild the temple absolutely and completely revoked. Somehow they found means to corrupt the principal officers of the Persian court, so that the orders of Cyrus were either not executed or executed so slowly that they became practically ineffectual. In all probability, they bribed these officials at the Persian court to cause delays and difficulties and to hinder the work.

The same thing goes on today. We hear of kickbacks, bribes, secret deals, and dealing under the table. It is the same thing. Look at verse 5 again: “And hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even in the reign of Darius, king of Persia.” Would you like to take a guess as to how long they actually frustrated the men in rebuilding the temple? Fourteen years. So, for fourteen years, the rebuilding of the temple ceased. Why?

Because of the constant struggle, harassment, and complications. Do you realize that is what happens today? I have known individuals who said, “God has called me to build a work right here in this town.” They try to rent or obtain a building, and the next thing they know, “You cannot live here, and you cannot have a church here. This is not zoned for a church. We cannot give a permit here.” I have known churches that were already in existence when the area was rezoned without their even knowing about it. Then the church had to fight just to remain in the place where it had already been for years. Pure complications. The whole impact of controlling by complications is to make the work so difficult, so full of heartache and trouble, that you simply give up—which is what they want anyhow.

Modern Illustration: Noah's Ark in Today's Society

You may have heard or read this before, but I am going to read you a little scenario that proves my point. It is entitled, “Noah’s Ark in Today’s Society.” Listen carefully:

“The Lord speaks to Noah and says, ‘In one year, I am going to make it rain and cover the whole earth with water until all is

destroyed. But I want you to save the righteous people and two of every kind of living thing on earth. Therefore, I am commanding you to build an ark.' In a flash of lightning, God delivered the specifications for the ark. Fearful and trembling, Noah took the plans and agreed to build the ark. 'Remember,' said the Lord, 'you must complete the ark and bring everything aboard in one year.' Exactly one year later, a fierce storm cloud formed on all the seas of the earth, and the water went into a tumult. The Lord saw Noah sitting in his front yard weeping. 'Noah,' he shouted, 'where's the ark?' 'Lord, please forgive me,' cried Noah."

"I did my best, but there were big problems. First, I had to get a permit for construction, and your plans did not comply with the codes. I had to hire an engineering firm to redraw the plans. Then I got in a fight with OSHA over whether or not the ark needed a fire sprinkler system and flotation devices. My neighbor objected, claiming I was violating zoning ordinances by building the ark in my front yard, so I had to get a variance from the city planning commission.

I had problems getting enough wood for the ark because there was a ban on cutting trees to protect the spotted owl. I finally convinced the U.S. Forest Service that I needed the wood to save the owls. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service won't let me catch any owls, so no owls.

The carpenters formed a union and went on strike. I had to negotiate a settlement with the National Labor Union. Now I have 16 carpenters on the ark, but still no owls. When I started rounding up all the other animals, I got sued by an animal rights group. They objected to me only taking two of each kind on board. Just when I got the suit dismissed, the EPA notified me that I could not complete the ark without filing an environmental impact statement on your proposed flood."

They did not take very kindly to the idea that they had no jurisdiction over the conduct of the Creator of the universe. Then the Army Corps of Engineers demanded a map of the proposed new flood plain. I sent them a globe. Right now, I am trying to resolve a complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission that I am practicing discrimination by not taking godless, unbelieving people on board.

The IRS has seized all my assets, claiming that I am building the ark in preparation to flee the country to avoid paying taxes. I just got a notice from the state that I owe some kind of user tax and failed to register the ark as a recreational watercraft.

Finally, the ACLU got the courts to issue an injunction against further construction of the ark, saying that since God is flooding the earth, it is a religious event and therefore unconstitutional. “I really don’t think I can finish the ark for another five or six years,” Noah wailed. The sky began to clear. The sun began to shine, and the seas began to calm. A rainbow arched across the sky. Noah looked up hopefully. “You mean, Lord, that you’re not going to destroy the earth?” “No,” said the Lord sadly, “the government has already done it.” Is that not true? That’s true.

False Accusations as a Complication Tactic

Secondly, we are still talking about how they try to control by complications. They not only hired legal counselors against them and bribed them; they used false accusation. “And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.” This is a very common tactic, and it is often used very successfully: writing an accusation.

Their report, of course, was very fallacious. It was wicked, full of malice, hatred, and spite. They charged the builders with being a turbulent, disobedient, and rebellious people, and suggested that the purpose of building the temple and the city was to rebel against the king and his kingdom. Obviously, there were some very high-up men in positions of authority who wrote this accusation.

“And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions unto Artaxerxes king of Persia. The writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. Rehum, the chancellor, and Shimshai, the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes, the king in this sort.” These were chancellors.

These were men of high positions and high authority. Rehum, the chancellor, Shimshai, the scribe, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes the king. The letter named the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, the Elamites, and the rest of the nation whom the great and noble Asnapper had brought over and set in the cities of Samaria and elsewhere beyond the river.

This was the copy of the letter they sent: “Thy servants the men on this side of the river at such a time, be it known unto the king that the Jews which came up from thee to us are coming to Jerusalem, building the rebellious and bad city, and have set up the walls thereof and joined the foundations. Be it known now unto the king that if this city be built, and the walls set up again, that they will not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so that shall endanger the revenue of the kings.”

They continued, “Now because we have maintenance from the king’s palace,” they were on the government dole; they were subsidized, “and it was not meet for us to see the king’s dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king, that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers. So shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time, for which cause was this city destroyed. We certify the king, that if this city be built again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side of the river.” Then the king sent an answer to Rehum, the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions in Samaria and beyond the river: “Peace at such a time, the letter which you sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.”

The king said, “And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition hath been made therein. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river, and toll, tribute, custom was paid to them. Give you now commandment to cease these men, or to cause these men to cease, that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. Take

heed now that you fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?"

The enemies present themselves as looking out only for the honor and advantage of the king. "We are on this side of the river, and we are just looking out for you, because we know that if this happens, you are not going to get the toll and tribute and tax money that you want." Those who are trying to rebuild the city, they say, are wicked, vile, and rebellious.

Here is a scenario that you need to keep in mind: the wicked are assuming a righteous role, and the righteous are castigated and condemned as wicked. How things get turned around. Years ago, I preached a sermon entitled, "Who Were the Rebels?" During the War of Northern Aggression, the South was called the rebels. Yet I demonstrated from history and from their own writings that it was the North that was rebelling against not only the Word of God but the Constitution of the United States.

Rebellion can only be against lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, it is not rebellion; it is resistance. So it was not the South that was rebelling against lawful authority; it was the North. Yet we are called the rebels.

Note this: when you first castigate someone and call him a name, usually that name sticks, and then he has to defend himself. I could look at Ron and ask, "Have you quit beating your wife?" If he says no, that means he is a wife-beater. If he says yes, that means he was still a wife-beater. I can call him a wife-beater, and he is a wife-beater; now he has to defend himself.

That is why everybody is so quick to call everyone a racist or a bigot. Now you are put in a position of defense because I called you that first. And that is exactly what these enemies are doing. They are saying, "We are the righteous ones; they are the wicked ones."

Isn't it amazing that the enemies of God have always castigated God's people and the righteous as anti-government and tax protesters? They said, "If you let these people alone, they are going to destroy your kingdom. They are anti-king and anti-government. Moreover, you will not get your tax monies, tribute, or toll, because they are tax protesters as well."

It is interesting, not only in the Bible but in history, that anyone who does not agree with the government to subsidize wickedness and rebellion is called a tax protester or anti-government. Anyone against wickedness in government is called anti-government or a tax protester. It is like when George Bush said, “You are either with us or you are against us.” Wasn’t that simple? In other words, if you do not agree with everything I am doing, you are against it.

Biblical Examples of False Accusations

We fail to remember that government can rebel just as an individual can rebel. That is why God asks in Psalm 94:20, “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by law?” A wicked civil government that makes sin legal does not have fellowship with God. Such a government has never been ordained of God, because God never ordained government to rebel against Him. But false accusations.

Nehemiah was falsely accused as well. They were not only castigating everyone who was building, but Nehemiah and Ezra also. Nehemiah 6:1 says, “Now it came to pass when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian and the rest of our enemies heard that I had builded the wall and that there was no breach left therein, though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates. That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono.”

“But they thought to do me mischief.” Nehemiah would not fall for that. It was like three or four hoodlums standing in the corner of a dark alley, calling you to come over and let them ask you a question. That is what they tried to do to Nehemiah.

He said in verse 3, “Now I sent messengers unto them, saying, I'm doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come to you?” They tried to get him to compromise, but he would not. “Yet they sent unto me four times after the same sort, and I answered them after the same manner.” They kept trying to get him to compromise, and he would not compromise.

“Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand, wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Geshem saith it, That thou and the Jews think to rebel, for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king according to these words. And that thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee in Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah, and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words.”

"Come now, therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I said unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work that it be not done. Now therefore will God strengthen my hands." What did they say of Nehemiah? "Well, you're doing this just so you can set yourself up as king. That's all. You just want to rebel. You just want to be king."

I know of pastors who've lost their families, their churches, and their ministries all because of false accusations. Many of those accusations were later discovered to be untrue and malicious. Yet for all practical purposes, it was too little, too late, because the ministry was already gone. So was the family. So was the church.

I've known of churches that have been ruined because of false accusations. All such accusations are wicked, wrong, hurtful, and evil. They are even more so when they come from people in positions of authority and power. It is one thing for your neighbor to lie about you, slander you, and falsely accuse you; that is bad. But when someone in a position of authority and power falsely accuses you, and then has the authority or power to confiscate whatever you have or imprison you, that is quite another thing.

Some of these people in Ezra and Nehemiah were chancellors and scribes—people in positions of power. Consider how powerful a false accusation can be. When you hear on the news or read in the newspaper, "So-and-so has been arrested for tax evasion," or "So-and-so has been arrested because he is a terrorist," or "So-and-so has been arrested because he's suspected of such and such," do you realize that most of the time, all that is false?

I've had articles written about me that are totally, absolutely, completely false, written by people in power. What are they trying to do? Silence us? Stop us? Destroy us? I want you to look and see how deadly a false accusation can be.

In 1 Kings chapter 21, we read: “And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house. And I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it. Or if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.”

But Naboth said unto Ahab, “The Lord forbid it me that I should give thee the inheritance of my fathers.” Naboth was not trying to get a better price. It did not matter what the price was. This was the inheritance of his fathers, and God had forbidden him to sell it. He could not sell it or trade it because God had divided the lands.

“And Ahab came into his house heavy displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him. For he said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I have spoken to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money, or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it. And he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the king of Israel? Arise, and eat thy bread, and let thy heart be merry.”

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 21:7-13 (KJV)

> “I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with a seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in the city dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, “Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And set two men, sons of Belial, before him to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king, and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.”

> And the men of the city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants of the city, did as Jezebel said unto them, Lord, have mercy upon them. And as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them, they proclaimed the fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him, and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people of God, saying, "Naboth did blaspheme God and the king."
>
> "Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which refused to give it to thee for money. For Naboth is not alive, but he's dead."
>
> Now I want you to note several things. First of all, Jezebel was the queen. A wicked, vile queen, but she was still queen. And she gave the orders for two men of Belial, two children of the devil, to give a false testimony, a false accusation against Naboth. Do you realize that Jezebel, as wicked as she was, knew biblical law? At least a little bit of it. Because she knew, according to God's law, there had to be a minimum of two witnesses for the death sentence. I'm just pointing out how the wicked will even use the word of God against the righteous. Here's a false accusation. It cost Naboth his life. But that's not all. Before I read this verse, I want you to think. Would it have done any good just to have murdered Naboth? The answer is no. Because Naboth had sons. He had heirs.

The land would have gone to them. So, in 2 Kings 9:26, Jehu says, "Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord. And I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord." Jezebel not only had Naboth murdered, but his sons as well—all through a false accusation. Can you imagine the number of men in prison today who have been falsely accused of molesting their own children or someone else's child simply because their wife

was mad at them or there was a divorce going on? All it takes is an accusation.

In our judicial system today, they will believe the wife or the child over an adult. Look at the number of women who have claimed to have been raped when they were not, and now the man is in prison. It is a false accusation. These false accusations are exceedingly powerful, and the enemy knows that. But look at what God says in Proverbs chapter 6, beginning with verse 16. Note the seven things that God specifically says He hates. God does hate, because the Bible tells us, "These six things doth the Lord hate. Yea, seven are an abomination to Him.

"A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among the brethren." If you analyze these seven things, six of them can relate to a false accusation. Everything but a proud look can relate to it, and really a proud look could indeed relate as well, because it is often the pride of our heart that causes us to do this.

Do you understand why, in God's law, Leviticus 19:16, God says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people. Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor, I am the Lord"? Even if something is true, it does not need to be repeated; it should never be repeated anyhow.

Deuteronomy 19 gives the penalty that God provides for a false accusation, or perjury. It tells us what should be done to the perjurer, the one who falsely accuses another. At least Jezebel knew this part of the law. God says, "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, then both men between whom the controversy is shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges which shall be in those days.

The judges shall make diligent inquiry. If the witness is a false witness and has testified falsely against his brother, then they are to do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother. Thus,

the evil is put away from among them; those who remain hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among them. The eye is not to pity, but “life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” In the context of judgment, God said that the perjurer, the false accuser, is to have done to him what he thought to have done to his brother. That would stop a lot of false accusation, I can assure you. In fact, if you sought to get your brother put to death, you would only do it one time.

God’s law has an answer to these problems. Unhappily, we reject God’s law most of the time as a government and as a judicial system. But understand this: the wicked have no compunctions about lying, misrepresenting, and falsifying facts if it enables them to accomplish their goal. You and I cannot do that, and we will not do that, but the wicked are not restrained. They willingly do so.

God's Judgment on the Wicked

They are going to try to control by complications, even by false accusations. This is their modus operandi; this is how they work. But there is something wonderful. Psalm 7 is very encouraging to me. I know the wicked do this, and sometimes they succeed temporarily.

But I've got some great news. Look in Psalm 7, beginning at verse 11: "God judgeth the righteous. And God is angry with the wicked every day. If he that is the wicked turn not, he God will whet his sword. He God hath bent his bow and made it ready. He God hath prepared for him, that is for the wicked, the instruments of death. He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutor. Behold, the wicked man travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He, the wicked man, hath made a pit, and digged it, and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."

The pate is the top of the head. In other words, everyone who digs a ditch to entrap someone will end up falling into the ditch. Anyone who tries to bring violence down upon someone else's head will ultimately have violence brought down upon his own head. Let me put it very bluntly: Every Haman will be hanged from his own

gallows. Isn't that wonderful? I'm looking forward to when God brings the wickedness of the wicked upon their own heads.

Third Attack: Constrain by Coercion (Force)

Now go back to Ezra chapter 4. Sometimes even trying to control through complications does not work. If we're not corrupted by compromise and not controlled by complications, what is the next step? Ezra 4:23–24 describes constraint by coercion: "Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem and to the Jews and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God, which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased under the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia."

Coercion is simply another word for force and power. The wicked are always eager, willing, and ready to use force just to demonstrate that they can use it. Usually, when they use force, it is an abuse, misuse, and overextension of that force. A royal prohibition had been issued, and as soon as it was issued, the enemies used it as an excuse to force, use power, and coerce the builders into ceasing their work. We are in the book of Ezra. Do you know what the book of Ezra is concerned about? Rebuilding the temple.

Some of the city naturally had to be rebuilt because the people had to live there. When you come to the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah is concerned with rebuilding the walls. Ezra, however, concerns people who are building the temple, not really rebuilding the city, but building enough for them to live in.

Usually, when force and power are involved with the heathen and the wicked, there is an abuse, misuse, and overextension of that power. Look at the king's order in Ezra 4:21: "Give you now commandment to cause these men to cease and that this city be not builded until another commandment shall be given from me." What was the order to cease? It was to cease building the city. He did not say, "Stop building the temple." He said, "I don't want the city rebuilt." According to their records, it was a great city that ruled over many countries. Therefore, he did not want it rebuilt. But they eagerly, quickly, and readily forced the people to stop rebuilding the temple. Look at verse 24.

"Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem." The king had said to stop building the city; he had not said to stop building the temple, but they made that stop as well. They used force, power, and coercion to make all the work cease simply because they believed they had the power to do it. I am sure that when they went there, they went well armed and well equipped in case they encountered resistance.

You cannot help but notice the eagerness with which they rushed to perform their supposed duty. "Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem." They were willing, ready, and eager to do whatever they could to make the work cease. They went up in haste. You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 1:16 about the wicked? "For their feet run to do evil and make haste to shed blood."

That is exactly what they were doing. They did the same thing to Nehemiah when he was building the wall. It was a different set of enemies, but they were trying to do the same thing to Nehemiah. They were going to use force.

"Now it came to pass that when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem and to hinder it." They were conspiring for a sneak attack, a surprise attack. "Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and we set a watch against them day and night because of them."

Judah said, “The strength of the bearers of the burden is decayed, and there’s much rubbish, so that we’re not able to build a wall.” Their adversary was planning to kill them: “They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.”

The Jews who dwelt by the enemy—living close to them—said to the builders ten times, “From all places whence you shall return unto us they will be upon you.” What were these people saying to those

building the wall? “You can’t win. They’re going to surprise you.” They were working with the enemy.

Look what happens. Nehemiah responded by setting the people in the lower places behind the wall and on the higher places, according to their families, with their swords, spears, and bows. Then he looked, rose up, and said to the nobles, rulers, and the rest of the people, “Be not ye afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, and your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”

When their enemies heard that their counsel was known and that God had brought it to naught, they returned, all of them, to the wall, every one unto his work. From that time forward, half of Nehemiah’s servants worked, while the other half held both the spears, shields, bows, and habergeons. The rulers were behind all the work. Of the house of Judah, those building the wall and bearing burdens, with those that laded, worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. Every builder had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. The one who sounded the trumpet was beside Nehemiah.

They thought they were going to surprise Nehemiah, but they received a surprise as well. Nehemiah armed the people and said, “We’ll fight.”

Several truths need to be made, and several principles need to be observed. First is this: while the wicked wrongly and wickedly prepare to use force against the people of God and the work of God, the righteous may righteously and justly defend themselves. Nehemiah armed the people and encouraged them in verse 14. Listen to what he said: "Be not afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and terrible and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses." So the first principle is this: when the enemies attack with force, the righteous may righteously and justly defend their lives with force.

Here is a second principle. Arms may be used to defend the work of God, but not to advance the work of God. We believe in regeneration, not revolution. It is only God who can change the heart. We are not conquistadors. We do not go out and put a sword to someone's throat and say, "Convert or die." We are not like those

Spanish conquistadors that did that, nor like the Muslims who do that. No. The Bible clearly teaches that arms may be used to defend the work of God, but not to advance it. We do not advance by using arms.

God's Sovereignty and Ultimate Victory

Thirdly, we have to remember this: the Lord, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, is the one who gives us courage, faith, and reason to fight. Do you remember what Nehemiah said? Nehemiah said in verse 14, "Remember the Lord." Remember Him. He is the one who encourages us to fight and to stand for truth and righteousness. Therefore, we have to always remember the Lord, so that we not only fight justly and rightly, but, when we fight, fight according to biblical law. These are three ways that enemies attack, and they always attack in these ways.

They try to corrupt you by compromise. They try to control you by complications, and they try to constrain you by force. They used every one of these tactics against both Ezra and Nehemiah. Here is the question: did their attempts at compromise, the political shenanigans, the false accusations, and the use of force prevail against the people of God and the work of God? The answer is no. Yes, it did stop them temporarily. That is a fact. Undoubtedly, the people were at times frustrated, disappointed, and disheartened.

But God is still on His throne. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 21, verse 1, that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he wills." The truth of the matter is this: everything goes wrong just right. We have to remember that God's time is not our time.

Often we get those things confused. But it is God's time and God's timing that always prevails.

For fourteen years they were harassed, hindered, persecuted, and oppressed. But look what happened after fourteen years. In Ezra 5:1-2 we read: "Then the prophets Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of

Jozadak, and began to build the house of God, which is at Jerusalem, and with them were the prophets of God helping them."

"At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor of this side of the river, and Shethar-Boznai, and their companions, and said to them, 'Who has commanded you to build this house and to make up this wall?' Then said we unto them after this manner, 'What are the names of the men that make this building?' 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. Then they returned to answer by letter concerning this matter. The copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor on this side of the river, and Shethar-Boznai, and his companions, the Apharsachites, which were on this side of the river, sent unto Darius the king. They sent a letter to him where it was written thus, 'Unto Darius the king, all peace. Be it known to the king, that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is built with great stones, and timbers laid in the walls.

"And this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked their names also to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us an answer, saying, You know who we are? We're the servants of the God of heaven and earth and build a house that was built these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. But after that, our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath."

Then they give a history lesson. They refused to give their names; they simply said, "We're servants of the God of heaven." Ultimately, after they wrote the king again, Ezra 6:6 records what happened.

"Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-Boznai, and your companions, the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence. Let the work of this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover, I make a decree, what you shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God, that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not

hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks and rams and lambs, for the burnt offering of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail. That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savors unto the God of heaven, and pray also for the life of the king and his sons. Also I make a decree that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon, and let his house be made a dunghill for this. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand to alter and destroy this house of God, which is at Jerusalem. I, Darius, have made a decree, let it be done with speed." Then Tattenai, governor of this side of the river, Shethar-Boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so did they speedily.

"And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built it and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel and according to the commandment of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. And the house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king."

Did all that stop the building of the temple? No. Our God shall always prevail, because He is the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, majestic, sovereign God of heaven and earth.

What are we to learn from Ezra and Nehemiah, especially in light of the two messages that I brought, one last week and this week? Are we to learn simply how our enemies attack? We should learn that. That is a fact. We must be aware of our enemies' methods and their madness. Let me read to you 2 Corinthians 11, verses 13 through 15.

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning Satan and his minions: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.”

He is saying that not everybody who presents himself as a minister of God is a minister of God. When people say, “Well, an angel spoke to me,” make sure you understand that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians chapter 1, “Though we or an angel from heaven speak any other word than that which we spoke concerning Christ, let him be accursed.” The word accursed means doomed and damned and set aside for certain destruction.

Paul also wrote in 2 Corinthians 2 and verse 11, “Lest Satan gain an advantage of us, for we're not ignorant of his devices.” We must know the methods, the wiles, and the devices. We must know what to look out for. That is true.

There is even more to learn. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. To me, this is the greatest truth being presented. I just read it to you in Ezra chapters 5 and 6, but I want you to see this same truth in the New Testament. Romans 8, beginning in verse 31:

“What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” If God be for us, it really does not matter who is against us. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again. Who is he at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we’re killed all the day long; we’re counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we’re more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I’m persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature—anything you can imagine—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Our enemies may attempt to compromise us, but they cannot corrupt us. They may attempt to stop us, but they cannot subdue us. They may attempt to silence us, but they cannot suppress us. They

may attempt to conquer us, but they cannot crush us. They may attempt to defeat us, but they cannot destroy us. They may attempt to dominate us, but they cannot devour us. Why?

Because we are the people of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and the Scripture says we are more than conquerors in Him, we must come to this realization: He cannot falter; therefore, we cannot fail. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and everything in between. I do not care how the enemy attacks, what tricks they pull, or what rules they use; nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. In whatever happens to us, we are more than conquerors through the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be aware of how our enemy acts, but we must be even more aware that we are already the victors. We have already won because Christ has won.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank You for the fact that we are indeed more than conquerors in Christ Jesus, and that we know, in Your time, all our enemies shall fall. Every Haman will be hanged on his own gallows. Everyone that digs a ditch shall fall therein, and You will bring their violent dealings down upon the top of their own heads. In Your grace and mercy, hasten that day. And even so, come, Lord Jesus. Give us grace to stay faithful and true regardless of the persecution and oppressions, the tricks and the ruse, and the attacks of the enemy. Help us to serve Thee faithfully and acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

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