

Why Should We Pray and Fight?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday May 18, 2008
Nehemiah 4:1-3, 7-9, 13-15; 6:15

“After I [Nehemiah] looked these things over, I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes’” (Nehemiah 4:14—NRSV).

“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.” (Nehemiah 4:14—KJV).

As we read the entire Bible, we see the importance of “praying and working,” “praying and defending,” and “praying and fighting.” Sometimes we are tempted to take the easy way and “just pray,” when God also expects us to pray, work and stand ready to defend or fight according to His will when necessary. Prayer and Bible study help us discover His will and know when we must fight.

When the Jews rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem, they left a good example in the words of Nehemiah, “So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night” (Nehemiah 4:9). They did not “just pray,” but prayed and also took appropriate action. Before the authorities arrested Him, Jesus warned His disciples that they needed to be prepared to fight and make a defense when He commanded: “the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:36). Paul tells us that to fight the devil we must not only “pray in the Spirit” but also wield “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18 and 17).

Nehemiah teaches that God is great and awesome, but that does not mean God does not expect us to take our part in the necessary warfare. We learn from experience and the days ahead may prove the need “to fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.” © 2008 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought or Class Discussion

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Think about your answers to the questions below before your Sunday school class meets, discuss in class, or use for further study. In some cases, I do not always write the questions to have a definitive right or wrong answer. In most cases, the questions should encourage everyone to think about how to apply biblical truths to their daily lives. Before beginning to answer the questions below, read the entire Scripture lesson in your favorite translation or compare translations. Write your thoughts in the space provided and take them to your Sunday school class for discussion.

1. What do you think Sanballat hoped to accomplish by ridiculing the Jews as they began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem? Why do you think some people ridicule Jews and Christians today?
2. Why do you think the Jews both prayed and set up a guard? Why not “just pray”? Or, why not “just set up a guard”? What does this teach believers today?
3. What was the importance of families in rebuilding the wall? How much more or less important are families today in today’s world? Give a reason for your answer.
4. Do you think Jesus might have told His disciples to buy a sword and sacrifice the comfort of a cloak to let them know that sometimes His followers would be called to fight and not passively die or suffer torture? How can prayer help you know when to fight?
5. What made Jesus’ death different from the death of a martyr? What battles did Jesus fight that did not involve the use of a physical sword? How did He win these battles?

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