

BUILDING WHILE BATTLING

(Part 1)

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The inspired apostle Paul taught that the Old Testament Scriptures “**were written ... for our learning**” (Rom. 15:4). Thus, in thinking about the approach to take in studying this timely and important subject, my mind ran to Nehemiah 4:1-23. Herein one finds God’s people doing the thing that is the subject of our study—“building while battling.” Therefore, we begin our study with what Nehemiah came to realize as he sought to build the walls of Jerusalem—*there can be no correct building for God without, at the same time, battling those who oppose God’s building and His builders.*

Nehemiah was in the business of restoring Jerusalem for the purposes God intended for the city under the Law of Moses. In order for the Jews to be safe in their efforts to accomplish the restoration of all things according the Law of Moses, the principle of “first things first” demanded that the Jews have the necessary protection from the evil influences and outright attacks of their enemies. But, the Jew’s enemies recognized this fact as much as Nehemiah did. Therefore, they set about to stop the building of Jerusalem’s wall.

Because the Jews faced a constant threat of, and actual, opposition to their work, they became profoundly weary and at times discouraged. However, because “**the people had a mind to work**” (*which attitude on their part also included a mind to fight*) according to God’s Will, they completed the wall and were victorious over their attackers (Neh. 4:6b; 9, 16-23).

Their mission was accomplished because Nehemiah and his countrymen realized that it was not a case of working **or** fighting; to the contrary, it was one of working **and** fighting. If Nehemiah and the people had not realized this fundamental principle of what is involved in getting the Lord’s work done and acted accordingly, their efforts to restore all things according to the Law of Moses would have failed. *Thus, the time for building is also the time for battling.*

Today, Christians are working to build the walls of spiritual Zion—the church of Christ (Let us emphasize that we mean by the terms *Christian* and *church of Christ* what the Holy Spirit inspired writers of the New Testament meant when they employed such terms in their writing of the New Testament). This work pertains to the saving of those souls of mankind who are accountable to God for their actions (Rom. 14:11, 12). Such persons are separated from God by their sins, cannot save themselves, and, therefore, must be saved by someone else (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Isa. 59:1, 2; Eze. 18:4b; Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2). That Savior is none other than Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:14-22; John 3:16; 8:24; 12:48; 14:6; Mat. 28:18, 19). Further, it is the case that Jesus saves the lost *only* through His Gospel as men believe it and obey the terms of pardon set out only therein (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 10:16; 2 The. 1:7-9

1 Pet. 1:22; Heb. 5:8, 9; John 14:15; Luke 8:11; Jam. 1:18; Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:41, 42, 47). Thus, we are to be always busy preaching the Gospel to the alien sinner (those who remain alienated from God because of their sins against Him—Rom.3:23; 6:23), edifying (spiritually build up) the church by teaching the Truth of the Gospel pertaining to the church's work, organization, worship, Christian conduct, and the final eternal reward in Heaven for the faithful members of the same (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 5:19-26; 6:1, 2, 7-9, 10; Jam. 1:27; Rev. 2:10; 2 The. 3:13). To think that we can be busy builders, building according to the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17), and not have opposition and persecution from Satan's crowd in and out of the church, is to live a pipe dream, deny reality and ignore the teaching of the Scriptures pertaining to the same (2 Tim. 3:12).

IF YOU ARE GOD'S BUILDER, TROUBLE KNOWS WHERE TO FIND YOU

It should be obvious from only a cursory reading of the New Testament books of the Gospel that as Jesus went about doing good (building) he was embroiled in various battles with His own people (Acts 10:38; John 8:12ff). In fact, part of the good our Lord did was done through His spiritual battles caused when He confronted, exposed, rebuked and refuted those who were steeped in error. To His disciples in general and His apostles in particular, Jesus plainly forewarned them of the persecution that would be their common lot as they went about preaching the Gospel, defending the New Testament system, and living Godly lives (Mat. 5:10-12; John 13:36).

For some strange reason, many in the Lord's church have bought into the false idea that if we can somehow learn to do good in the correct way, there will be no opposition, hence no controversy, and, thus, no persecution. In view of all that is in the Bible that contradicts such an absurd concept, why many church members have been duped by it is beyond me. However, the fact that certain church members have been deceived into believing such a ludicrous and false doctrine is further proof that if the Bible boldly teaches one thing, certain people are bound and determined to run contrary to it.

For emphasis we note again that Paul wrote to Timothy concerning the certain persecution that would accompany their good works when he penned, **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"** (2 Tim 3:12). If no other Bible references existed but the previously quoted one regarding Christians suffering for their faithful service to God, Paul's statement to Timothy would suffice to clearly show us that if one works for the Lord one must expect some kind of persecution from God's enemies.

However, to Timothy he also wrote, **"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier"** (2 Tim. 2: 3, 4). Paul saw Timothy for what a faithful preacher of the

Gospel actually is—a soldier in the army of the Lord. But, he saw nothing in Timothy that he had not first observed in himself. In coming to the end of his life, he wrote to Timothy declaring, **“I have fought a good fight,...”** (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul understood the same thing as did the apostle Peter when he wrote regarding the devil’s disposition toward Christians as they go about building for the Lord. Peter declared: **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Pet. 5:8). We too must understand what Paul and Peter did in carrying out their faithful service to the Lord, specifically, that *as builders for the Lord, we are actually inviting the devil’s agents out for a fight*. May we correctly conclude then, that the greater the worker (builder) one is for the Lord, the greater attention Satan is going to give to such a person? That being certain, the words of Paul to Timothy previously quoted, along with passages of like sentiment, further show the importance of Christians learning the following fact—*that in order to build as God directs such building, one must be prepared to do battle with Satan’s troops*.

THE APOSTLE PAUL, ONE WHO BUILT WHILE BATTLING

To more fully emphasize the importance of our topic we want to examine the attitude and life of the apostle Paul. Among mortals there has not arisen a greater servant or builder of God than was Paul. However, in reading the New Testament about Paul’s work in building for the Lord, we quickly see that the apostle to the Gentiles was a battling builder. For his tremendous sacrificial service to his Lord, Paul received horrendous persecution from the enemies of Christ, from alien sinners, and false brethren alike. However, no matter the person who persecuted Paul, he declared to the Philippians that he was, **“...set for the defence of the gospel”** (1:17b). As if to emphasize the preceding point, the apostle to the Gentiles also wrote, **“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries”** (1 Cor. 16:9). With the many opportunities Paul had to build up the kingdom, he recognized that with those opportunities came the Lord’s adversaries—in the case of the **“great door and effectual”** he mentioned in the previous verse, there were **“many adversaries.”**

I truly believe Paul never met an adversary he did not like. Here is what I mean by the previous sentence. Paul looked upon opposition by the Lord’s adversaries as a great expeditious instrument whereby he was afforded the opportunity to proclaim and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice Paul’s attitude and conduct in the book of Acts when he was given the opportunity to defend himself before the mob, the Jewish council, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (Acts 21:37—26:25). Moreover, we have no reason to believe when Paul stood before Caesar to give an account of himself that he changed his message from what it was when he stood before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa.

One of the things we learn from God’s faithful first century servants is the fact that God providentially used adversaries to spread the Gospel. In view of the

previous statement, notice what Jesus told Paul, **“Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome”** (Acts 23:11). If we do the good works necessary for building up the church, building that was characteristic of the faithful members of the Lord’s church of the first century, the devil will see to it that we will be confronted by his henchmen. When this confrontation happens, for the faithful, this means only one thing—the battle is on and there is no retreat to be sounded by the faithful soldier of the Lord. The church of the first century understood the preceding point—*in order to build where error is ruling, error must be attacked and destroyed before Truth may reign in error’s stead*. Since it is so clearly taught in God’s Word, why is it that many Christians today (if not most—many of them preachers and elders) do not see this important aspect of faithful service to God? Could one of the principle reasons for such blindness on the part of brethren be for the same reason that denominationalists (though they possess the same Bible as Christians do) reject the Bible’s teaching concerning the plan of salvation, especially its teaching about baptism and the Lord’s church? Among the denominationalists their principle reason for rejecting the Bible’s teaching on baptism, the church, et al., is simply this—*their preconceived notions about salvation will not allow them to accept all of what the Bible teaches on such subjects*. We believe we are on the right track when we conclude that many members of the Lord’s church reject the Bible’s teaching concerning **“all who live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** for the same reason that denominationalists reject Bible’s teaching on baptism and the church—*it does not fit in with their concept of what is involved in preaching the Gospel and living the Christian life*.

THE SUCCESS OF THE MILITANT CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURY

Of the early church’s growth Luke recorded, **“But the word of God grew and multiplied”** (Acts 12:24). This is inspiration’s way of declaring that the faithful brethren were busy building for the Lord—as the church taught the Scriptures and the people believed and obeyed them, the Word of God through their belief in and obedience to it radically changed their lives. This is the result of the early church taking Jesus seriously concerning His commission to them to teach the Gospel to others (Mark 16:15; Mat. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:12). They preached the Gospel to the alien sinner, edified the saints with the Truth, and in their benevolent activities built up the church as they kept their lives holy. They were truly practicing **“pure and undefiled religion”** (Jam. 1:27; Gal. 6:10).

We must take space to emphasize that those first century Christians discharged their obligations to God without a single tool that many in the church today claim we must possess in order to be successful in building for the Lord today. Let us note some of the “tools” that many church members today think are imperative for us to have if the church is to grow, which tools the early church did not have?

1. A preacher who is a great speaker, a people-mixer, a glad-hander, possessing a formal education with a desire for big everything and hopefully capable of getting as much money out of the brethren as possible;
2. A beautiful building in a fine location in the right area of the community—with lots of money in the church treasury to pay for “the church plant/campus;”
3. The community’s acceptance of the church, especially those who are socially and culturally influential, possessing large bank accounts and drawing large salaries;
4. Successful businessmen or their equivalents in the leadership of the church who are generous with their money;
5. Freedom of religion and good economic conditions;
6. A wealthy nation at peace;
7. Good weather at the right time of the year and plenty of money to spend on various functions, most of them designed to appease biblically ignorant and materially spoiled church members, etc;
8. “Good prospects” for conversion with well-heeled bank accounts;
9. Everything pertaining to the work of the church offered in a convenient season for the members who have plenty of money to spend on food and frolic;
10. Spoiled and unruly young people who are rallied, entertained, encouraged to participate in such para-church organizations as “Lads to Leaders” while their mentally adolescent parents do as they please;
11. “Youth ministers” and a lot more money.
12. So-called “Christian education” that takes much money always from every direction for ever;
13. Brotherhood projects (radio, TV, etc.) with lots of money.

In the previous points there are things that within themselves are not wrong, such as spreading the Gospel through radio, etc., higher education conducted by the brethren, sacrificial giving on the part of the brethren, and the like. However, there are other matters within the preceding points that are wrong, such as the organization “Lads to Leaders”, continued support of the universities (as well as other institutions) operated by apostate brethren; the **attitude** that says we **must** have money, good weather, “good prospects,” formally educated preachers, successful businessmen in the eldership and everything convenient before the Lord’s work can be accomplished. We have put them together because this is the way such things exist in reality. Elderships rarely examine loosely, much less scrutinize, what is presented to them for support. They basically support things on the basis of (1) it has always been done; (2) a favorite preacher or such like recommends it; or, (3) they simply like the sound of it. Further, they determine they will *not* support other things where the aforementioned points do not exist. Rarely do elders or church members examine anything as to whether they should or

should not support it (financially or otherwise) on the basis of it being authorized by the Bible and that the brethren who are involved in the work are Godly in their conduct.

Some churches have developed the extreme attitude of the Federal Government—if there is a problem, the solution to it is simply more money. The other extreme thinking in such matters is that if there is a problem, we will quit financially supporting anything. Of course, both of these extremes are not supported by the teaching of the Bible.

In studying the New Testament, we see that the faithful members of the early church did not think that before the Lord's work could be done the church coffers had to be running over and each Christian at least a part of the upper middle class of society. How many members of the Lord's church today in the United States could truly say along with the apostle Peter, **“Silver and gold have I none”** (Acts 3:6), and not allow their lack of money to hinder or completely stop their part in the Lord's work? On the other hand, there were those brethren who had wealth and God expected them to use it to the furtherance of the Gospel and in defense of the faith (2 Cor. 8:7ff; 9:6ff; Jam. 2:1-9; 4:1-3, 13-17).

WHAT DID THE EARLY CHURCH POSSESS THAT MADE THEM SUCCESSFUL IN THE LORD'S WORK?

Let us note some of the things the first century church had with which to accomplish the task of preaching the Gospel to every creature and edifying the church (Mark 16:15).

1. Most of the preachers were of a mediocre background academically and otherwise. By his enemies even the highly educated Paul's speech was said to be contemptible (2 Cor. 10:10). Our requirements for formal education would rule out the fishermen apostles from Galilee.

2. The cause of our Lord prospered without any building owned by the church at all.

3. On various occasions, first century Christians were run out of town rather than the community receiving them with open arms. In First Corinthians chapters one and three, we learn that they were considered as fools and offscouring of the earth for the cause of Christ.

4. The church was a “growing church,” doing its work under the harsh rule of the Roman Caesars. But, as the opposition mounted, the more the church grew. The first century church had everything but peace. Where do we find any first century Christian praying: “We are thankful we are gathered here without fear of molestation?”

5. What about good weather and opportune times? These items seemed to be of no consequence to those faithful brethren of the first century (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:31).

6. They had neither prospects nor conveniences as we have come to know and expect them. Their prospective members were such fellows as the Philippian jailor, Saul of Tarsus, the ruler of the synagogue, and the wicked Corinthians—persons that would not be considered to be “good prospects” for a Bible study or possible conversion by many modern-day church members.

7. They had no baptistery, heated or otherwise, no air conditioning, no heat, no baptismal clothing, etc.

No matter, the early church preached the Gospel to the whole world in their generation (Mark 16:15; Col. 1:4- 6, 23).

In order to be successful builders as the first century church was, we need to notice the marks of their attitude that is lacking today. Consider the following:

1. We must forget about being popular with all facets of society. Jesus said, **“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets”** (Luke 6:26).

2. We must realize there will come times when we must make a clear distinct choice for God and His system but against men—in and out of the church (Acts 5:29).

3. We must have fearless preachers of the Word of God; preachers who will sacrifice their lives to preach and defend the Gospel because they love God, the Gospel, the lost, and the church. And, yes, they are willing to do their work for God whether they are paid well or not. We need stalwart soldiers of the cross who are willing by faith to enter Lion’s den of Satan and beard him therein.

4. We do not need “good humor,” “hand-holding,” “baby-sitting” denominational pastors filling the pulpits of the church and conducting business as public relations men. Indeed, “as goes the pulpit so goes the church.” Elders are you listening?

We have developed and are cultivating a sectarian denominational clergy mentality and approach to the preacher’s work, rather than looking to the teaching and example of Christ, the Old Testament prophets, His apostles and the early evangelists to learn how to be effective preachers of the Gospel. If one desires to know how to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted, look to the aforementioned persons to see how it is done—then do it with all your might.

Further, we need to look to those early 19th Century restorers of the ancient order of things; those great individualists of faith who trusted in God and not man; then, later in the same century, those faithful brethren who by their strict adherence to the New Testament Pattern kept a remnant faithful, heading them off from the headlong rush of many brethren of that day into the apostasy that brought forth the Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ—we need to follow such brethren as they followed Christ. But sadly, and to the church’s great hurt, these great brethren are not used as examples of how to do the work of faithful evangelists. If anything, they are repudiated and held up by this generation as the prime reason for the division in the church of yesteryear. None of the universities can really be fully trusted to take young people fresh out of high school and further their education in the ancient New Testament order of things. A few of them are possibly better than

others of them, but none of them are where Freed-Hardeman College was in doctrinal teaching and Godly conduct in the days of the late N. B. Hardeman's presidency. These institutions of higher learning are all too often tools of Satan and enemies of the cross of Christ. And, in view of recent happenings in the church certain preacher training schools are toddling along in their more refined academic elder sisters' footsteps.

Why would any New Testament Christian desire to eat the same old warmed over denominational soup that is offered in the spiritual cafeterias of the institutions of higher education operated by the brethren? The answer to the preceding question is understood when we realize why Israel of old wanted a king—*it was more important to them to be like the people round about them than to be as God demands for His people to be.*

5. If the church is to remain faithful, there must be in every child of God a great dependence on God. So much so that we will be a praying people as the first century brethren were admonished to **“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”** (1 The. 5:17).

6. Further, we are not developing spiritually because many of us lack faith, vision and optimism in the Lord's work. How many of us are examining the area where we live with the desire and intent to expand the influence of the Gospel in the lives of our neighbors? We have all manner of options to use in discharging our obligations to teach the Truth to the world—radio, TV, the Internet, CD's, home Bible studies, newspapers, Bible correspondence courses, Gospel meetings, VBS, lectureships, printed matter, etc. Why are such aids not being used effectively by each congregation of God's people according to their several abilities?

In view of what the First Century church did without all that we think we must have today to accomplish the work of the Lord, what would the First Century church have accomplished in their efforts to spread the Gospel with these great modern tools? But the real question is what are we doing with such tools? We actually have these marvelous tools for our use in spreading the Gospel—tools of expediency (advantage) of which we doubt they could even dream.

But what did our brethren of 2000 years ago possess that many modern Christians sadly lack?

1. They possessed love of and faith in God and His Truth. They full well knew that their actions had to be authorized by the Lord and that obedience to His Will was the only true proof of their love for and faith in the Christ (John 14:15; Col. 3:17; Heb. 5:9).

2. Our brethren of old were convicted by the Truth of the Gospel, thus, they were converted and sanctified solely on the basis of the Word of Truth. Therefore, they possessed a fervent zeal to do their duty to God no matter the cost to themselves (John 8:31, 32; 17:17; Acts 2:37; Phi. 3:12-15).

3. Those ancient saints were thankful for their own salvation and they deeply loved lost souls and the church. So much did they love them that they gave their

lives to reach them with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and to edify the saints (Acts 7:54-60; 8:4, 5; 20:17-35; 2 Cor. 4:15; Phi. 1:3; 4:1).

4. They also knew that they were pilgrims and strangers in this present world (Heb. 11:9, 10; Jam. 4:14; 1 Pet. 2:11). They, therefore, did not attempt to “put down roots” in the affairs of this present age. Many members of the church continue to suffer many disappointments because they continue to look for permanence in this ever changing and transitory world, that in time will cease to exist altogether (2 Pet. 3:10-14).

Having noted the previous important points regarding the work of the church then and now, we do not desire to run to the extreme of causing anyone to think that money does not have its place in the building up of the church. The Bible has much to say regarding its correct use. However, the Lord’s church does not have to possess money or these other tools many people today think they must have before we can do what God requires of us in building and battling for Him. That is our point at this place in our study.

What is said of the Macedonian brethren regarding why they gave of their means as they did (though they had little when compared to the Corinthians) is another important point we desire to make and emphasize. Of the Macedonians’ reason for giving more than what Paul thought they could give, he wrote that they, “...**first gave their own selves to the Lord...**” (2 Cor. 8:5). Until every Christian realizes that the church is built up *only* when each member loves the souls of those lost in sin (as well as loving the brethren) to the point of desiring to teach them the Gospel, we will never accomplish what the first century church did. The key ingredient for being faithful servants of Christ and thereby God’s battling builders is seen in Paul’s statement to the Corinthians when he wrote that Christians must “**abound in every good work**” (2 Cor. 9:8). When each Christian abounds in good works (as the Bible defines and uses “**every good work**”), the church will be “building as well as battling.”

It is sad but true when it comes to building for the Lord that some of us are convinced that the “cheapest way is the best way.” Because brethren love “their” money and material things, it does not take much to convince them that the cheapest way is the Lord’s way. *Thus, the amount of some brethren’s faith in God is directly proportionate to the amount of money in the church treasury.* Have we ever given any serious thought as to how the Lord at His coming is going to view church coffers full of money—money that is not out working to spread and defend the Gospel? *Remember, the one talent man was not condemned because he had only one talent, but because he did not use it properly* (Mat. 25:24-30).

THE CHURCH MILITANT

The church is Christ’s army. Thus, Christ’s army faces a battle—a fight. Hence, Paul told Timothy to “...**endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus**” (2 Tim. 2:3; Also see Eph. 6:10-17). The church of Christ, therefore, must be a militant

church. By the word militant we mean “engaged in warfare: Fighting. Aggressively active: combative; Syn. Aggressive.” Thus, as we turn to focus on this aspect of the church’s conduct, we understand that the church is to oppose error and in doing so engage the enemy in spiritual warfare. We are to do this by aggressively obeying the Captain of our salvation in (1) preaching the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15, 16) and (2) not permitting the advocates of error free course in or out of the church (Acts 15:1, 2; Gal. 2:5).

Concerning religion, the first century populace was a society that was largely indifferent regarding religion. The church was declared by those who were opposed to it as having “**turned the world upside down**” and as “**every where ... spoken against**” (Acts 17:6). Nevertheless, as we earlier noted, the Lord’s church impacted that long ago world for good in a great way. In a very brief period, the first century church (as the Lord had commanded them to do, Mark 16:15) had discharged their obligation to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the world—“**to every creature which is under heaven**” (Col 1:23). How was the church able to do so much for the Lord in such a short period of time?

The church of the first century was unwilling for the one true and living God to be just another god among the gods (Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 17:22-29). They knew that preaching in kindness and love did not mean compromising the Truth to any degree or that such forbade them from frankly, candidly, pointedly, and where necessary, very bluntly telling people the truth about their false beliefs, erroneous conduct, and their lost condition (Eph.4:15). Further they understood that love is always subservient to authority and never rises above, alters in any way, or makes null and void God’s authority (Col. 3:17; John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-5; 5:2, 3). “Uncertain sounds” did not describe the preaching done by the apostles and evangelists (Notice the plainness of Paul in Eph. 4:4-6 and in Acts 17:24-31; Also see 2 Cor. 3:12).

Christ was not presented as a savior among many saviors. Paul declared but one Savior, Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:5). Notice how the church followed the apostles’ example in so doing, declaring that men could be saved only through Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 3:19-22; 4:12). Those Christians did not compromise the truth of John 8:24.

The world was “**turned upside down**” (their ungodly world was in actuality turned right-side up when people believed and obeyed the Gospel) because the church contended that the Gospel was the one and only message that could save man from sin and keep him saved (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). No matter how small a thing it may have seemed to some, those faithful brethren did not allow any tampering with the Gospel message to go unchallenged, unrebuked, and uncondemned (Gal. 1:6-9; 2:4, 5, 11, 14).

They aggressively rejected and opposed the false idea that “one faith is as good as another.” They preached that there is “**one faith**” (Eph. 4:6; Jude 3).

Steadfastly and consistently, the first century brethren contended for the genuine source of faith (Rom. 10:17; John 8:31, 32; 17:17; Luke 8:11).

Though they were persecuted for boldly preaching the Gospel, as they fled from their persecutors they **“went every where preaching the Word”** (Acts 8:4). They attacked the Jewish authorities with the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). They challenged any and all to refute their message. To the highly learned Greek Philosophers, they preached **“Christ the wisdom of God.”** Their soldier lives were not dear to them in the battles they fought for their King. They were willing to give themselves away because they had learned that to live for the Lord was to die to the world (2 Cor. 5:17-19; Rom. 6:3-5). They knew the Lord had taught:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it (Luke 9:23, 24).

Because of their love of and trust in God they kept the army of the Lord pure (Acts 5:1ff; Gal. 6:1; Rom. 16:17, 18; 1 Cor. 5: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9-13; 2 The. 3:6). The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride or vain glory of life was not permitted to abide in the soldiers of Christ’s first century army (1 John 2:15-17; Col. 3:1-8).

Unlike today the people of the first century either loved or hated the church—there was “no in-between.” It was the subject of conversations, discussions and debates all over the world. We need to ask ourselves, Have we restored the aggressive nature of the Lord’s church? Are there efforts being put forth by weak and insipid brethren to thwart the restoration of spiritual aggressiveness in the Lord’s body? To ask these questions is to answer them—indeed there are such efforts being made. It is being done under the guise of Godliness, love, and kindness, that in reality, are false concepts of the same. Love declares the Truth of God’s Word in no uncertain terms. It also exposes false doctrine for what it is—soul damning error. It also marks the false teacher to be an enemy of God’s Truth and the church of Christ. The world must learn that not only does the Gospel of Christ differ from the doctrines of men, but that the difference in the Gospel and man’s doctrine is a heaven or hell difference for every responsible person living today.

For some ignorant but well-meaning brethren to object to the previous important points that are seriously lacking in today’s church by stating: “We must make a positive approach; we must not build up prejudice by preaching any negative matters,” we must militantly respond to their false views by directing them to our Lord and his apostles’ teaching and practice in preaching and defending the Gospel. Will our modern day “positive” and “balanced” preachers willingly ignore the candor and frankness of the Christ and his apostles in their proclamation and defense of God’s Word? With many of them the clear and concise answer is, “Yes, we will ignore such relevant Bible teaching.” It is one of the few things they are

bold enough to emphatically and dogmatically declare. Obviously, they are quite negative to some things, are they not?

There will be no building according to the Lord's plan except there is the disposition of mind in every builder to battle as well as build. In fact, as we have studied, a significant and very important part of spiritual building is spiritual battling. Thus, in that which was written afore time for our learning (Rom. 15:4), we read about the Jews in Nehemiah's day:

And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me (Neh. 4:16-18).

In closing this brief study of "Building While Battling," remember the good and faithful words of Caleb of old when, concerning entering the land of Canaan, he declared: **"Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are able to overcome it"** (Num. 13:30). Our Lord has not commanded us to do that which we are unable to do. When our mind-set is the same as Nehemiah and his building, battling Jews, today's church will get the attention that will set it apart from all other religions—of course the persecution from many adversaries will follow, but with each adversary will come a new opportunity to spread the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Men will then understand that we are serious about doing the Lord's Will. But until then we are merely playing "at church." And, in the eyes of the Lord such "play" will not bode well for us.~