

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, 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 brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses. (Nehemiah 4:14)

Fear is a hard boss to please! The rebuilding of the wall and gates of Jerusalem was a monumental task. When the people were actually engaged in the work, then discouragement began. The first tactic of the discouragers was to convince the workers of the futility of the project. The Jews were hearing from other people that they were not strong enough to complete the work. They were told that the work itself was substandard. *Not good enough* was the taunt that was issued. How many times have the people of God begun a good work to hear seeds of doubt from the mouths of others that *there is not enough...not enough people...not enough money...not enough strength... not good enough...so we might as well quit.* I've heard that more than I care to recall. Many times it has come from within...I have heard me talking to myself.

The seeds of doubt began to take root in the Nehemiah project and the people were discouraged. This seems to be natural to a human being. The desire to give up. Quitting becomes the norm. But as for the people of God, there is a different way to live. Live being *encouraged...rather than discouraged.* Courage comes from God, who empowers godly leaders to encourage the discouraged among them.

Nehemiah recognized that the work was bigger than them. And he saw their fear. Fear is a visible thing that can manifest itself in our lives. When a leader sees his people afraid, he speaks to them about the source of courage. Our enemy uses the tactics of terrorism. The threat of their physical safety was very real. Nehemiah reminded them to think about the character of God and *fight* for their families, friends, and houses...to know what things are truly worth fighting for!

Here's a lesson to the fearful people of God. Fear God, not people. The strength that they relied upon was in the community effort of building and security. They needed one another. Courage is often exhibited when people are in fearful circumstances and they do what is right at the risk of their own safety. *They learned to work in the midst of their fear.* They learned to watch one another's back. They were moving in a direction of community strength as they learned the secret of body building. They could not be strong against outside forces when they treated one another as outsiders. A lesson for God's people. Learn to treat family like the Father wants them treated. God's people made peace with one another, courageous in their unity against those who sought their destruction. God was not only praised, but pleased. He is pleased when His people look out for the welfare of one another. Let's build up the body of Christ, loving and trusting God who helps us love, trust, help, encourage, and serve one another.

God has not given us a spirit of *cowardice.* This is especially instructive for me. Cowardice is a type of fear that is particularly disabling. Cowardice is being afraid of doing the right thing...even when we know the right thing to do. I have heard it said that courage is fear that has said its prayers. Cowardice does not talk to anyone. It's too ashamed. Cowardice is too afraid of its fear. The reason God has not given us this kind of spirit is that God is not a coward. This is the reason He consistently says to His people...*Fear not, I am with you.*

My encouraging word today is that God will give me courage, not cowardice. If fear is courage that has said its prayers, maybe that's the problem. Cowards don't talk much with God. If cowardice is found in you, talk to God about it. He is able to give you something different. The truth is Courageous people hear from God...and do what He says. They gain the courage that overcomes their cowardice. To be encouraged by God is to be enabled by God...to encourage one another.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam