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Neh 4:2 And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?”

Neh 4:3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!”

Neh 4:4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives.

Neh 4:5 Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

Neh 4:6 So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

Neh 4:7 But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry.

Neh 4:8 And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.

Neh 4:9 And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

Neh 4:10 In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.”

Neh 4:11 And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.”

Neh 4:12 At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.”

Neh 4:13 So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

Neh 4:14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to 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 homes.”

Neh 4:15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.

Neh 4:16 From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah,

Neh 4:17 who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.

Neh 4:18 And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

Neh 4:19 And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another.

Neh 4:20 In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

Neh 4:21 So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out.

Neh 4:22 I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.”

Neh 4:23 So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.

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The opposition to the rebuilding of the wall seemed to come from people without, but actually it came from within. Who are Sanballat and Tobiah? We may think that they represent people on the outside who frustrate us from preaching the gospel or standing for the Lord. Actually, they may represent the world and our natural man with the natural concepts and thoughts within ourselves. We may be like them. How?

1. Sanballat and Tobiah were seemingly with the Jews (their brothers) - v.2. They were seemingly companions. This means that companionship may not necessarily be healthy. If it is merely social, in the long run, it will frustrate us from following the Lord. All companionship must involve prayer and pursuing of the Lord.
2. Our natural love towards those who are close to us. For example, our relatives may tell us not to spend so much time on the church life. After all, how much can we do, and what difference will it make? - v.2
3. Minimizing our burden and exercise - despising our portion - v.3
4. In God's eyes, this is a sin - v.5. Many times, we think sin is only committing immorality or losing our temper, but sin means to miss the mark. Any time we undermine or minimize the burden that God has given us or the saints, or any spiritual exercise, we are guilty of sin and even provoking God to anger.

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Neh 4:12 At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, "You must return to us."

The opposition without is not as intense as the opposition within. The people of Judah said that the strength of the rebuilders was failing, and that they would not be able to rebuild the wall by themselves (v.10). The Jews living close by came from all directions and told Nehemiah and the builder ten times that they should return to them, in other words, they should abandon the burden.

Many times, in the church life, the "opposition" is more intense than from without. What hinders the building up of the church is our lack of burden, or our criticism of those who are burdened and exercised to operate. We may be like the Jews in v.12. For example, if our children desire to follow the Lord and even serve the Lord, do we encourage them and give them the opportunity to grow and develop, or do we hinder them? Education and career are necessary things, but big traps for parents to fall into, even to those parents who love the Lord and have even paid a price to follow the Lord. They may not want their children to pay the same price, and encourage them to pursue their education (necessary) and get a good job (necessary). Many of these Jews (parents) had returned from captivity to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah had teams who prayed (v.9). He also had a plan to guard the building of the wall day and night. May we exercise to pray in teams in the church life to guard our burden and exercise to shepherd people and build the church.

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Neh 4:14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to 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 homes.**”

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Neh 4:17 who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.

Neh 4:18 And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

1. The Jews wanted the rebuilders to return to them (v.12), to give up fighting and perhaps take care of their families. However, Nehemiah realized that the real care for the families was actually to care for God's house. Most of the time, we put our family first (education, not spiritual), then the church. In v.14, Nehemiah exhorts the people to fight first for their brothers, then for their family (sons, daughters and wives), and then for their homes. We would like to care for our children's education, their extra-curricular activities and their marriage (all essential things). Do we have a heart to care for the brothers and sisters, to fight for them, for their growth, or do we pay attention first to our homes and our families? Indeed, we need to pay attention to our homes and our families. However, in Nehemiah's view, to fight for the church is to fight for our families, that they would know the Lord and grow in the church life.
2. Nehemiah and the teams of saints not only prayed, but Nehemiah also had a plan as to where each team would be placed, by family, with their spears (v.13). In the church life, do we have a plan? Do we have a plan for how to shepherd our family (e.g. reading Bible stories to our children), the saints, what we would like to see? Nehemiah placed the people by the lowest section of the wall, according to their clans or families. This means that the fighting begins with the family life. How do we fight for the church? We fight for the raising up of our children to know and love the Lord. We do not trust in our plan, and we should even be ready to lay aside our plan if the Lord would speak to us otherwise. We do not do anything by way of organization or arrangement, but we do need a plan. Without a plan, the rebuilding of the wall would not have taken place.

Neh 4:19 And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “**The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another.**

Neh 4:20 **In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”**

Neh 4:21 So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out.

Neh 4:22 I also said to the people at that time, “**Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.”**

Neh 4:23 So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, **none of us took off our clothes**; each kept his weapon at his right hand.

1. There are so many needs in the church. That is why Nehemiah was burdened to raise up teams to address different needs. However, Nehemiah also realized that all the teams were separated on the wall, far from each other. He therefore encouraged the nobles, officials and the rest of the people to rally to them when they heard the sound of the trumpet (v.19). Prayer and labor by teams is crucial, but corporate prayer (the sound of the trumpet) is also crucial. Each team serves according to different needs, but in one accord and for the entire church. Any need in the church becomes the need of the whole church.
2. The labor must go with prayer (v.22). This is not ordinary prayer, but specific prayer, by night, not individual, but prayer with a companion (“servant” which, in Hebrew, means a boy or a young man). Nehemiah joined this guard (v.23). This means that he himself participated in the nightly prayers. Also, none of them took off their clothes, indicating that they were girded up and ready, not loose. In our prayers, are we girded and exercised to pray specific prayers, and also watch for the Lord’s response? Sometimes, when we pray, we may be satisfied that we have prayed, and relax (take off our clothes). However we may miss the Lord’s response and our next step if we are loose or relaxed.

When Judah began to build the wall of Jerusalem, the enemy began to attack:

In chapter 4, we see a picture of Judah's response to the attacks on the outside and weakness on the inside. Today, we also need to have such a response in the church life.

**Outside:** when Sanballat and Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being repaired, that the breaches were beginning to be stopped, they were very angry. The accomplices were coming to attack Jerusalem and disrupt the city. And these enemies boasted: "They will not see until we enter among them, kill them, and end this work." This forced the people of Judah at the forefront to ask Nehemiah ten times for reinforcement. This also shows that the people of Judah were weakened because they kept repairing the walls.

**Inside:** There is still a lot of dust, and the manpower to carry it is depleted, so we can't build the city wall. **Nehemiah's response:**

On the one hand, to pray to God, and on the other hand to send someone to guard and be on guard day and night. (4:9) God cooperates with man in this way. To preach the gospel requires us to pray, on the one hand, and on the other hand to work diligently to preach the gospel.

In addition, there are words of encouragement and comfort:

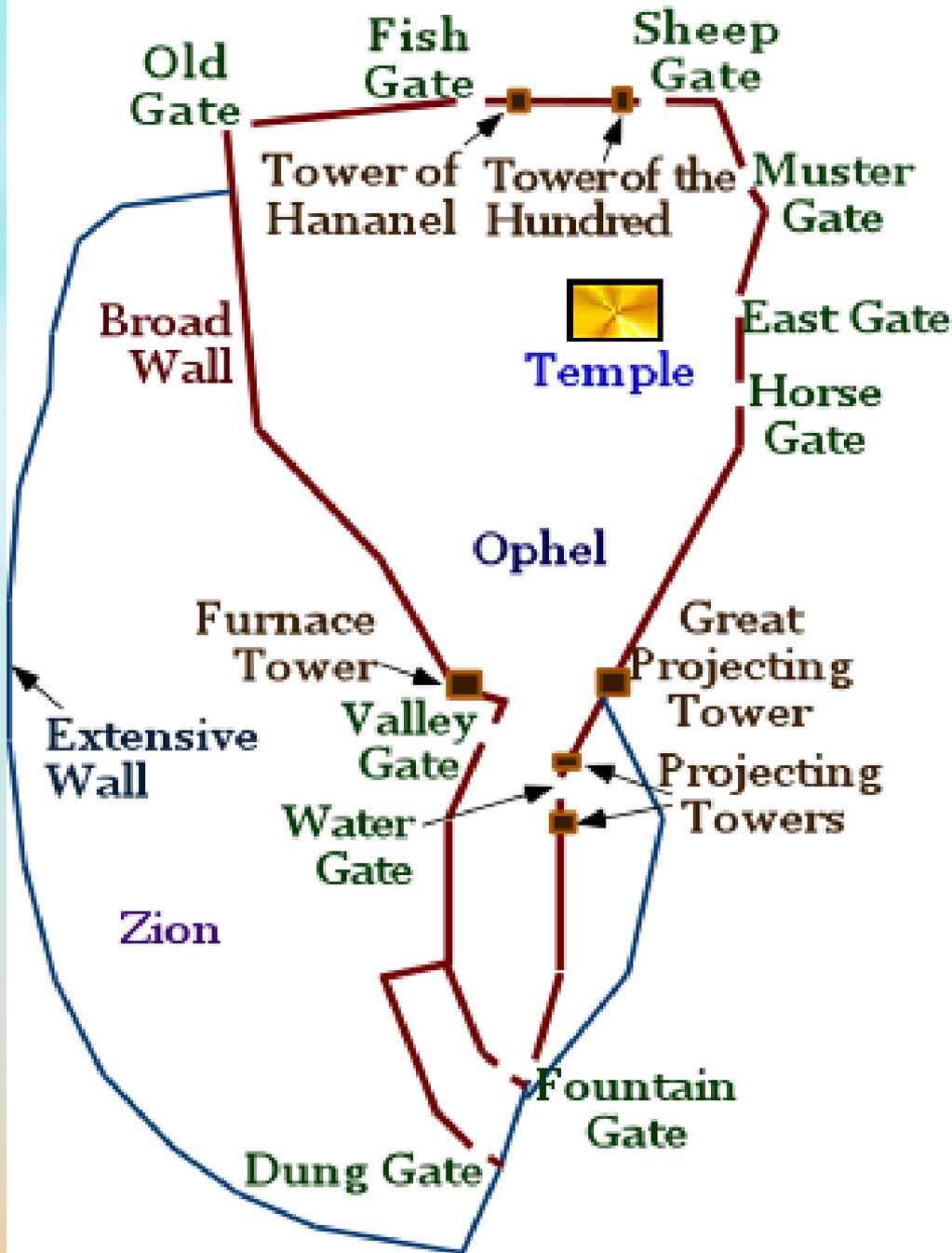
"Don't be afraid of them! Remember that the Lord who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses. (4:14) Our God will fight for us." (4:20)

**The result is a state of alertness:**

From morning until evening, half of the people were working on the construction of the wall, and the other half were armed and living in Jerusalem. In order to protect the workers at night, some people even went out to fetch water without taking off their clothes while sleeping. Also bring weapons. (4:21-23)

We also need this kind of vigilance in our lives, to pay attention to our actions and words, lest the enemy attack us.

1 Peter 5:8 Be vigilant, watch. Your adversary [the] devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour.



## NEHEMIAH'S JERUSALEM

### Map illustrations

\*Neh 1:2 -2:19: Nehemiah, in 445 BC (Artaxerxes' 20<sup>th</sup> year), returned to Jerusalem from Susa the citadel to repair the gates and walls as the governor of the province of Judah (Neh 5:14) .

\*Neh 13:6: Nehemiah, in 433 BC (Artaxerxes' 32<sup>th</sup> year), went back to Susa and then returned to Jerusalem.

\*Neh 2:12-16: Nehemiah surveyed the wall during the nights.

\*Neh 3:1-32: the walls repaired and by whom.

\*Neh 6:15: the wall was repaired in 52 days (445 BC)。

\*Neh 7:3: Nehemiah asked the inhabitants by turns to watch the wall in front of their houses .

\*Neh 8:1-4: after the wall was rebuilt, the Israelites gathered at the Water Gate and listened to the reading of the books of Law by Ezra and celebrated the Feast of Booths and later fasted and confessed their sins.

**Pillar: Nehemiah** □ **small team in one accord** □ **repaired the wall and gates...**

□ **Nehemiah and Ezra** □ **church pillars service team in one accord** □ **the saints may continue to grow in Christ in many different aspects.**

Neh 4:1 **Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged**, and he jeered (mocked) at the Jews.

Neh 4:2 And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?”

Neh 4:3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!”

To repair and rebuild the wall should not pose any threat or harm to the neighboring races and tribes. However, Sanballat and his gang tried their best to interfere with such a work. Why? They may have been in fear that these walls would damage their political, religious or social gains. Today it is the same. That was why the Lord said in **John 15:18-19**, “**because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you.**”

**Sanballat and his gang also in Neh 4:2 used five mocking phrases to mock the Jews who were repairing and rebuilding the wall. Why?** They tried to intimidate the Jews and discourage them from doing their work. His gang such as Tobiah the Ammonite followed his mocking attitude. This is similar to **1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8**: “**Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**”

**John 15:18-19** If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; **but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you.**

Neh 4:4 **Hear, O our God,** for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives.

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Neh 4:7 But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry.

The enemies' mocking, despising and reproaching were very mean, but Nehemiah did not get angry, nor did he take out the letters of the Persian king to exert authority, but committed everything to God. He knew that in a spiritual battle, the best way to fight back against the enemies was not to sneer, but to pray earnestly and continue to speed up the building of the wall. **Nehemiah also asked God, "Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight,** for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders".

**Although the city wall was not high enough, the rebuilder first heightened the broken wall to one half of the required height first, connected these broken parts of the wall afterward, and then heighten it to the required height. This rebuilding was very wise, not leaving a gap for the enemies to come in from the outside of the wall.**

**In the church life it is extremely dangerous to let the enemies find a gap to sneak in (ex. When we invite a gospel friend to attend our LD meeting).** The church must lead the saints to grow in the life of Christ little by little in one accord. Then the saints will be able to close the gaps of the church and then further grow up together, so that the enemies have no place and strength to attack the church, in particular, **our one accord.**

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Neh 4:9 And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

Neh 4:10 In Judah it was said, "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall."

The circle of enemies was getting bigger and bigger. At first it was **Sanballat** and his gang **Tobiah** in Samaria to the north, followed by Geshem the Arabian in the south, and then the Ammonites in the east and the Ashdodites in the west. Jerusalem was not adjacent to the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, but the reconstruction of the city wall made them "very angry" inexplicably. This unprovoked anger came from Satan. Similarly, the world hates the church and there is no need for a reason.

When Jerusalem suffered the attacks from all sides, the leaders of the people prayed for God to deal with the enemies and relied on the Lord more. The angrier the enemies were, the more they prayed; the more the enemies were disturbed, the more alert the leaders were. Similarly, the greater the difficulties the church faces, the more the leaders of the church must pray and have more burden and wisdom, so as not to leave a gap for the enemies.

When the city wall was half built and the people were set as a guard day and night“, however, the strength of those who bore the burdens was failing, there was too much rubble, and they felt that by themselves they would not be able to rebuild the wall. Why did they think this way? Because, they were like us, often looking at the environment, looking at themselves and not looking for and relying on God. **This is exactly what Satan desires, and he uses all the possible methods to damage the one accord and move our eyes away from God and God’s will . We need to be alert to such kinds of tricks of Satan.**

**All the enemies mentioned in Nehemiah chapter 4 may be part of the complicated "I".**

"I" is so complicated (based on the outline of brother Titus' conferences)

**The Bible describes us, the fallen man "I", in at least six aspects:**

- I, is the general term for who I am;
1. I live without Christ as **an old man**;
  2. The life of my old man is **the soul life**;
  3. My old man's dwelling place is in **the sinful flesh**;
  4. My old man's self-esteem, pride, self-pity, opinions, and persistence are **self**;
  5. My "old man" has a natural life created by God, which is manifested in his abilities, talents, insight and plans. This is his **"Natural" aspect**.
  6. My old man who loves and serves the Lord but without the Lord expresses **a religious life**

We never dreamed that we would possess these six aspects which are diametrically opposed to the face of God, making us sinners through and through. **When the Lord Jesus came, He did not deal with the I in the same way. He nailed the whole "I" to the cross.**

Neh 4:11 And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.”

Neh 4:12 At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us **ten times, “You must return to us.”**

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Neh 4:15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that **God had frustrated their plan,** we all returned to the wall, each to his work.

“You must return to us” points to those who live near the enemies and face their mocking and threatening, continuously pressured (ten times) to give up their rebuilding work to go back to where they live and protect their family members. **Family affection unknowingly became a tool for the enemies to disturb the hearts of the people, and the frustration gradually spread to all the Jews (the whole church).** So Nehemiah told 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 homes.” **This means that we do not stop the rebuilding, but complete the wall as soon as possible, because the Lord, who is great and awesome, Himself will frustrate the enemies’ plan.**

**Because of Nehemiah’s leading and speaking, the Jews all returned to the wall, each to his work. Therefore the church needs such a leading servant like Nehemiah who subjectively knew God Himself, God’s desires and God’s mighty power and the tricks of Satan and the weaknesses (human needs) of the people.**

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**As the leading brother, Nehemiah was also among those who were ready to fight the enemies, and had a part in the night watch.** He did not leave these things to others to do, but personally participated. He is our example. Because of the example and leading of Nehemiah, on the one hand, the Israelites were ready to fight **in one accord**; on the other hand, they trusted God and believed that God would fight for them, and they continued their hard work to rebuild the wall.

Although the enemies retreated temporarily, Nehemiah did not become relaxed, but rather continued to be alert. He gathered the people together **in one accord** with the sound of a trumpet, instead of relying on many people, standing instead on the side of God and closely following God, because "Our God will fight for us." **Psalm 127:1 Unless Jehovah build the house, in vain do its builders labor in it; unless Jehovah keep the city, the keeper watches in vain.**

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Neh 4:22 I also said to the people at that time, **“Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.”**

Neh 4:23 So **neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.**

**The threats of the enemies became the driving force, the first one granting the heavier burden to the servant, Nehemiah, to speed up the rebuilding of the wall.**

Today, the more the world resists God, the more it will urge those who love God to seize the time diligently and alertly to know the Lord, spread the gospel and raise up pillars.

**The enemies desired to attack the Israelites at any time.** Therefore, the people continued to be vigilant and on guard: “each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.” Nehemiah was the first to take the lead: “none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.” **Today, we also “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11). We must also pay attention to: “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:27).** Therefore, we should “work with one hand and hold weapons in the other,” and watch and pray in the daily church life.

Today, the spiritual warfare of believers is also for the building of the kingdom of God. When we gather together in Christ, **support and watch each other in one accord**, the testimony of the body of Christ can be revealed, and the triumphant power of Christ will also be revealed; **Rom 8:31 If God is for us, who can be against us?**