

Strategies To Live A Victorious Life!

- Do you ever feel when you wake up as if the weight of the world is on your shoulders? (...)
 - Do you feel burdened down by all your problems or those of your families and friends? (...)
 - Have you ever felt like some of the problems just seemed so huge that it tested your faith in God and all that you know to be true and good? (...)
 - Did those problems sometimes seem to hinder your prayers? (...)
 - The apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 16:9 “For a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”
 - Whenever we attempt to do what God has called us to do, whether praying for others, encouraging others, helping others, etc. the enemy will do whatever he can to come against us to stop us. He sends his adversaries of fear, doubt, discouragement, hard circumstances or even the negativity of others into our lives and tries to make those problems seem giant and impossible to overcome.
- We are going to look at these adversaries Satan uses, whether mental attacks or real life attacks, and learn how to overcome them and live a victorious life that God has called us to.
- We need to be ready to stand our ground and refuse to give up and focus on God and not the enemy’s tactics.
- Today, we are going to study a story in the Bible that shows us how to live victoriously no matter how bad things may seem. To help us understand this, we are going to study a famous group of people who understood giant adversaries first hand. The Israelites!
- First off, let me give you a little history of what has happened and what is happening in our story today. In 588 BC (588 years before Christ), King Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. He captured all the Jews and took them to Babylon and only left a very small weak remnant of Jews to take care of Jerusalem and its surrounding towns.
- Next, God moved in the heart of King Cyrus, King of Persia, to conquer this same Babylonian Empire and take control over all of it, which included Jerusalem. God also laid on King Cyrus’ heart to let the people rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
- It now has been decades since they were sent back by King Cyrus to rebuild the temple and this is where our story begins. Things have not been going well all those years. Every time they tried to build the walls around the city, someone would come and burn them down. Also, the temple was still in ruins because of all the invaders and those who did not want them to rebuild it.
- This is where our story begins. We will see how someone teaches them that having faith in God, even amidst the giant obstacles that are before them, will put their focus on the One Who can handle them all and fix them according to His plan and His purpose.
- His name is Nehemiah and he is the royal cupbearer to the existing King of Persia, King Cyrus, who rules over all the lands at this time.
- Does anyone know Nehemiah’s nationality? (An Israelite/Jew.)

-Let's pick up our story here and read our 1st verse together on our Verse Sheet to find out what is happening: (Nehemiah 1:1-4 “The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the Citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, ‘Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in *great trouble and disgrace*. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.’ When I heard these things, *I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven.*”)

-According to this verse, how do you think the Jews were feeling? (Troubled, discouraged, hopeless, disgraced.)

-They have just been through years of adversities and they are now in, what they considered, a hopeless state.

-Let's bring this home to the present for a moment and ask, have you ever felt this way, that everything just seemed too hopeless and impossible in your situation or someone else's? (...)

- Have you ever felt discouraged by others who were being critical instead of helpful? (...)

-Have you or do you know of someone who may be dealing with any of this right now? (...)

-Let's stop and look at Nehemiah for a moment. At the very end of these verses we just read, what did he do? (He sat down, wept, mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven!)

-When we go through certain seasons of life that have huge struggles, it is fine to mourn and weep. Even God's Word says in Ecclesiastes 3:4 “[There is] a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

-So we know from God's Word that there will be those seasons and it is okay to mourn.

-But what are the last 6 words of this verse? (“...[He] prayed before the God of Heaven”)

-Think about this for a moment... “the God of Heaven”. When you hear these words, what does it make you think about God? (He is the One Who put the stars in their place and set time and order and placed each of us where we are at in eternity for His glory. He is All Powerful and able to handle all that there is here on this earth and in the heavens.)

-This is the same God that Nehemiah is talking to, praying to and He listens and answers.

-Nehemiah teaches us that there is hope... we are not alone, because we have the God of Heaven we can turn to and He is ready to intervene on our behalf!

-In the midst of his prayers, the Jews were still struggling in Jerusalem with what seemed impossible. And that may be happening to us and our loved ones as well today. While we mourn and pray, we and they may be struggling in these situations and everything seems impossible and hopeless!

-The Enemy, Satan, loves to discourage God's children, many times using other people to do it or even our own past and sometimes even our difficult present to do it. He takes every opportunity and uses every adversity he can to get us to think that God has forgotten about us or isn't working on our behalf.

-Now, here is the encouragement for all of us that we are going to learn from Nehemiah and the Israelites!

-Even though they were a discouraged people, Nehemiah still had faith in God and God's promises to them that Nehemiah remembered from of old. *Amidst* their circumstances he still believed God was going to have the victory!

-Where do you think those promises were found? (In God's Own words.)

-Let's look at what Nehemiah says to God in our next set of verses. Let's read them together, #2 on our Verse Sheet: (Nehemiah 1:5-9 "Then I said: 'Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, Who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against You. We have acted very wickedly toward You. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws You gave Your servant Moses. Remember the instruction You gave Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but *if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.*'")

-What was God's promise to His people, hint, it's near the end of the verse? (That if they were faithful and obedient to His commands, He will bring them back from the farthest horizon to the place He has chosen to dwell.)

-Let's think about this for a moment. If they were obedient, He brings them from the farthest horizons to the place where He has chosen for a dwelling for His name.

-Do you think, in the midst of our own struggles, that if we remembered Him and were obedient to Him, turning to Him rather than to others with complaining and anger, that He too will bring us close to His heart, His place of dwelling? (...)

-When we confess our sin of bitterness and anger for the situation we find ourselves or our loved ones in, the Lord can work in our hearts and we are able to hear Him, feel His presence, and He draws us to Him bringing us healing and peace.

-Have you ever felt the kind of peace that only He can give in our hearts when everything around you seems to be crashing down? (...)

-That is where the heart of the Father is, with You in the midst of it all.

-Now, even amidst the promises and faith and His presence, we still have to walk through obstacles with Him, just as the Israelites had to as they rebuilt the city.

-Let's see how the Israelites handled this victoriously.

-First, when Nehemiah gets to the city, and they start rebuilding, one of their primary enemies was Sanballat.

-Let's read verse #3 together: (Nehemiah 4:1 "When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became *angry* and was greatly incensed. He *ridiculed* the Jews.")

-What were two things they began to battle that came from this man Sanballat? Hint: It is italicized in your verse. (Anger and ridicule.)

-Have you ever battled anger or ridicule from someone else or maybe in your own heart? -Well, if you have, you are not alone!

-Let's look at how they ridiculed the Jews in verse #4: (Nehemiah 4:1-3 "Sanballat, in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, 'What are those **feeble** Jews doing? **Will they** restore their wall? **Will they** offer sacrifices? **Will they** finish in a day? **Can they** bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble – burned as they are?' Tobiah, the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, '**What they are building** – if even a fox climbed up on it, he **would break down** their wall of stones!'")

-How many times did they say, “Will they?” (3)

-Then they said “Can they” and “It would break down”! They were ridiculing them, trying to discourage them and break them down.

-How many times do we battle in our own minds ridicule of ourselves or of others? Do you ever say things like: “I can’t do it or they can’t do it! I’m not able or they aren’t able! It just won’t happen or work out!” (...)

-Or have you ever said things about others like Sanballat and Tobiah did? (...) Maybe something like – “They’ll never do anything right!”? (...)

-We must recognize these things come from the enemy, whether through our own minds or by him using other people, all to keep our minds from the One Who “is Able” and “Can do” and “Will help us!”

-During this time, Sanballat, Tobiah and the Ammonites were plotting to kill the Israelites as they are rebuilding the wall. Let’s read Verse #5 together to see what the Israelites are battling inside their own hearts: (Neh. 4:10-12 “Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, ‘The *strength of the laborers is giving out*, and there is so much rubble that *we cannot rebuild* the wall. *Also, our enemies said*, Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.’ Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, *Wherever you turn, they will attack us!*”)

-There are four areas of discouragement written here in these verses that they faced that we face today. These are Satan’s giant obstacles that he wants us to focus on. Let’s look at them:

1. “*the strength of the laborers is giving out*” – What’s the obstacle here? (Fatigue) - When you are tired, do things seem darker? (...)
2. “*we cannot rebuild*” – What’s the obstacle here: (Lack of Vision) – Do you think there is no purpose for you or you can’t do something God has called you to do? (...) For those who are physically and financially unable to do what others may be able to do, remember that prayer and worship are the two greatest things God calls all of us to do and it is close to His heart.
3. “*Also, our enemies said*” – What’s the obstacle here? (Listening to Others) – Do you listen to others instead of what God says about your situation? (...)
4. “*Wherever you turn, they will attack us*” – What’s the obstacle here? (Fear) – What are some things that you or a loved one may be afraid of in your or their situation? (...)

-Now let’s learn some clear battle instructions! Let’s read verse #6 together: (Neh. 4:4-5 “*Hear us, O our God*, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.”)

-What is the first thing they did here in the first 5 words of this verse? (Called on God!)

-Is that usually our first instinct? (...) What is? (calling others, complaining and fear)

-Let’s read verse #7 together: (Neh. 4:9 “But we prayed to our God and *posted a guard day and night* to meet this threat.”)

-So, just as they first went to God and prayed, what did they do second? (Posted a guard day and night.)

-How can we post a guard in our hearts and minds day and night to battle the attacks of Satan and his discouragement? (By reading and meditating on God’s Word day and night.)

-These are the battle plans that we, as believers, can use to have victory over the enemy. We go to God first about everything, and then we continually meditate on His Word day and night so we know the promises He has made to us!

-But they didn't stop there! Let's read our final verse to see what they did, #8: (Neh. 4:6 "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked *with all their heart.*")

-What did they do? (They rebuilt the wall)

-They acted! They got up and went forward and did what God called them to do *among all the struggles.* They believed in Him and trusted in His word! They acted in faith in Him.

-Are you willing to do that? Are you committed to believe in God's plan and purpose for you and committed to act in faith even among the struggles in your life? (...)

-And how did the Israelites do this according to the last 4 words in this verse? (With all their heart!)

-"With all their heart" means that they wholeheartedly trusted in God in their struggles and circumstances that He would take care of them and their families and their struggles. And He did, God helped them rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.

-Let's just remember that amidst all our struggles and all that we may face, that if we stay obedient to God and pray to Him and worship Him with all our heart, He will give us the victory over whatever we face in His perfect timing!

-And not only that, He will be walking with us through it the whole time, never leaving us, giving us His peace and comfort! Just as God helped the Israelites rebuild their city, He will help you rebuild your life for His glory! Don't ever give up! He is faithful!

STRATEGIES TO LIVE A VICTORIOUS LIFE VERSE SHEET

1. Nehemiah 1:1-4 “The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the Citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, ‘Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in *great trouble and disgrace*. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.’ When I heard these things, *I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven.*”
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6. Nehemiah 4:4-5 “*Hear us, O our God*, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.”
7. Nehemiah 4:9 “But we prayed to our God and *posted a guard day and night* to meet this threat.”
8. Nehemiah 4:6 “*So we rebuilt the wall* till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked *with all their heart.*”