

## **LIVING IN COMPLETE FREEDOM**

### **Galatians 5:1 NIV**

**It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

When Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead, He purchased our freedom.

### **Colossians 1:13-14**

**13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

### **John 5:24**

**24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.**

### **John 8:36**

**Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**

If this is true, why are there areas in my life that don't yet reflect this reality?

Although we have been set free by Christ and our spirit has been born again, we still live in a fallen world. We also live in a body of flesh, and our minds need continual renewal by the Word of God, so, we need to watch out for anything that tries to drag us back into any type of bondage.

Today we are going to look at a story in the book of Nehemiah that illustrates well this topic.

Because of Israel's disobedience and unfaithfulness to God, Babylon invaded Israel and the Babylonians had captured the city of Jerusalem. They burned the temple of God; they pulled down the city's wall and they had taken most of the population captive and marched them off to exile into Babylon.

One day Nehemiah received sad news about the city of Jerusalem from one of his brethren.

### **Nehemiah 1:2-4**

At this stage the temple of God had already been rebuilt some years before, but the city wall was broken and there was no protection against enemies.

**4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.**

One day while Nehemiah was serving the King, the King noticed that Nehemiah was not well:

### **Nehemiah 2:1-5**

**Then I prayed to the God of heaven, 5 and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”**

Nehemiah was given permission by King Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem and fortify the city by rebuilding its wall and gates. When Nehemiah gets to Jerusalem, he speaks to all the people:

### **Nehemiah 2:17-18**

As soon as Nehemiah and the people decided to start the work of rebuilding Jerusalem's wall opposition rises. Some of Israel's old enemies were back, seeking to keep Jerusalem in ruins.

**Nehemiah 2:19**

**But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"**

Nehemiah stood his ground against his enemies and said:

**Nehemiah 2:20**

**"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."**

This reminds us of when the Devil tempted Jesus in the desert. This is how the Devil operates most of the time, he comes to challenge anyone who is willing to pursue God's will.

**Matthew 4:6**

**Matthew 16:22-23**

## **1. STAND YOUR GROUND AGAINST THE DEVIL**

Remember that we are talking about living in the freedom that Christ has given us.

If you belong to Jesus, you are no longer under the Devil's bondage; you can stand your ground against him, like Nehemiah did and Jesus did.

Sanballat and his friends are a type of how Satan and the kingdom of darkness operate against the people of God.

**James 4:7**

**7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

Sanballat and his friends continued to intimidate and mock Nehemiah and all the volunteers who were rebuilding the wall of the city:

**Nehemiah 4:1-3**

But Nehemiah ignored his enemies' remarks, he stood his ground against them and continued with the work.

**Nehemiah 4:6**

**So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.**

Nehemiah encouraged the people to not give up and to persevere, despite the mockery and threats.

**Nehemiah 4:14 "And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."**

## **2. DON'T GIVE UP – PERSEVERE!**

When you face challenges, or when temptation comes and tries to derail you from doing God's will for your life or something is pulling you back into bondage, persevere and don't give up.

**Ephesians 6:13: Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

But the troubles of Nehemiah did not end there.

I want you to see that this is how the Devil works, he keeps persisting and he uses different strategies to see if you fall into his trap or to discourage you.

**Nehemiah 6:1-3**

Then Sanballat and his friends also spread rumours to accuse Nehemiah of rebellion against the King, just to put fear in his heart. **Nehemiah 6:8-9**

Accusation is another tactic that the Devil uses against believers.

**Revelation 12:10**

Despite all the opposition, in only 52 days, Nehemiah and the people finished the wall.

**Nehemiah 6:15-16**

This was a massive feat. People in the surrounding cities understood that it was God who made it happen, despite great opposition.

Nehemiah had done a good job and things were finally coming into place. Nehemiah completed the wall and continued further reforms in Israel for about 12 years.

However, upon Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem sometime later, he had to face a new challenge, of a different kind.

**Nehemiah 13:4-5** Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was allied with Tobiah.

### **3. WATCH OUT FOR TOBIAH**

Nehemiah found out that the priest whom he had left in charge of the house of God made an alliance with Tobiah.

**Nehemiah 13:7**

**7 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.**

The large room where Tobiah was living in was supposed to be the place to keep all that was necessary for the temple of God to function properly, to store grains, oil, articles, frankincense, provision for the Levites, etc.

The room was now filled with Tobiah's personal household goods which had nothing to do with the temple. Nehemiah took the matter into his own hands and threw everything out.

**Nehemiah 13:8-9**

**And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. 9 Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.**

This part of the story reminds me of what Jesus did when He cleansed the Temple of God.

**Matthew 21:12-13** Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. **13** And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "

The Apostle Paul said in:

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17**

**Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

**17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.**

**Ask yourself: Could there be a Tobiah in my temple?**

Could this be the reason why I am not experiencing the freedom that belongs to me in Christ? Could this be the reason why I feel that I cannot overcome certain things in my life?

Tobiah's presence was interfering with the work of God in the Temple.

**In 1 Corinthians 10:23 we read: All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.**

Tobiah is a symbol of those things that don't belong in our lives.

#### **4. DEAL WITH TOBIAH.**

Tobiah can be our own flesh, can be people and voices who don't belong in your life. Tobiah can be anything that has the potential to interfere with the freedom that you have in Christ, including demonic activity.

**Galatians 5:16**

**16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Here is a list of what we should look out for:

**Galatians 5:19-21**

**Ephesians 4:22-24**

You need to check the inner chambers of your heart and look for any potential Tobiah that is hindering you from walking in freedom. You can never overcome what you tolerate or refuse to confront.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify these areas in your life and He will empower you to overcome.

**Galatians 5:16**

**16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

**Galatians 5:15 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.**

