

## Nehemiah: Building a City Within the City, week 6 The Sword and the Trowel (Nehemiah 4:15–23)

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*Our God will fight for us.*

— Nehemiah 4:20

One of my great heroes outside of Scripture is the great reformed Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892). Spurgeon began preaching shortly after his conversion to Jesus Christ at the age of sixteen. He soon became the best-known Bible preacher in the world in his day, and perhaps the best preacher in the history of the church outside of Scripture, along with John Chrysostom (349–407). Spurgeon preached up to ten times a week and was heard by twenty million people from his pulpit. He became perhaps the most notable defender of Christian orthodoxy in his day due to his publications, including over one hundred forty books in addition to weekly transcripts of his sermons, which amassed two to three hundred million sales. When Charles Spurgeon started his church magazine in 1865, he borrowed the title from Nehemiah 4 and called the publication *The Sword and Trowel*.

These images are incredibly important because they show that anything we build for God (e.g., spiritual life, marriage, children, business, ministry) requires carefully undertaken, painstaking work as typified by the bricklayer's trowel. However, building alone is insufficient because what is built can and will be destroyed unless it is also defended and protected. Subsequently, the ability to also wield a sword in our other hand is a noble and godly skill to be mastered, particularly by men whom God has appointed to lovingly head their home. In light of these powerful images, two important questions are worthy of our consideration:

### **Trowel: What has God burdened you to build?**

- A spiritual life?
- Marriage?
- Children?
- Business?
- Ministry?

### **Sword: How can you best defend what you are building?**

- A spiritual life?
  - Defending against apathy with a vision to glorify God in all things.
  - Defending against false teaching with study.
  - Defending against demonic attack with prayer.
  - Defending against isolation with meaningful Christian friendships.
- Marriage?
  - Defending against division with a unified theology about gender, marriage, and family.

- Defending against temptation with accountability and regular intimacy.
- Defending against folly with wise friendships.
- Defending against bitterness with forgiving grace.
- Children?
  - Defending against danger by carefully choosing who has access to your children (e.g., friends, extended family, teachers, coaches).
  - Defending your daughters by fighting for their purity and holiness.
  - Defending your sons by fighting for their masculine dignity.
  - Defending against financial ruin by saving, investing, and insuring.
- Business?
  - Defending against litigious attacks with good bookkeeping and record-keeping.
  - Defending against employee turnover and theft with adequate hiring controls, fair compensation, and respect.
  - Defending against purposelessness by connecting your business to a meaningful kingdom purpose.
- Ministry?
  - Defending against sin by modeling and proclaiming repentance.
  - Defending against false teachers by fighting for the truth.
  - Defending against insufficient funds with generous tithing.
  - Defending against distractions and competing agendas with a clear focus on Jesus.

**Next week:** Join us for Easter Sunday.