

An Obstacle Race

An obstacle race is one in which the runners must negotiate (go over) contrived obstacles. *Contrived* means they were planned or set up. An *obstacle* is an obstruction that prevents a forward movement or course of action. Persecution by Sanballat was just such an obstacle the builders of the wall had to overcome. He created difficulty or opposition to hinder Nehemiah in his course of action or purpose. A *course* is moving from one point to another and a *race* is a pursuit, career, contest. A *career* is a course through life. In an obstacle race the runners must overcome obstructions set up by the Evil one. They must overcome them, scale, go over, surmount all the set up obstacles — all the lies, accusations, slander, intrigue, compromise, scorn, force, craft.

The Community as an Obstacle Course

An obstacle race has hindrances, impediments, barriers, obstructions — many obstructions, difficulties — many difficulties, hurdles — many hurdles. All who enter an obstacle course must jump these things that get in the way and interfere with their progress. They must overcome the first, then go on to the second, then so forth until the end, overcoming all interruptions and even stumbling blocks (Mt 18).

1 Cor 16:9 — There is no winning without warring. No opportunity without opposition. No open door set before us without many adversaries to obstruct our entering. We face the same hazards as Nehemiah.

The Hazards of Nehemiah

Nehemiah knew the hazards of wall building — obstructions and setbacks. The wall builders had to surmount and overcome them. But how much do we owe to the difficulties and setbacks? To the obstructions and oppositions, the obstacles which have been permitted to try us. The things we thought were breaking us were in reality making us. Things like the Hikel case, the Isaac case, the Raid! It is always men like Nehemiah who become the inspirers and encouragers of others — overcoming Satanic opposition and worldly anti-cult and Christian anti-cult syndicates. Both are Satanically inspired. But we have learned there is no triumph without trouble, no victory without vigilance. When the saints say, “Let us rise up and build,” the enemy says, “Let us rise up and oppose.” There is a cross in the way of every crown worth wearing.

The lukewarm have already been spewed out of His mouth. Why?

- a. They were not valiant for Truth upon the earth (Jer 9:3).
- b. They did not forsake all; there was still rebellion in their members (Eze 13:5).
- c. They made their children materialistic and so they sacrificed their families to their idols (Eze 16:20).
- d. They said in their hearts, now was not the time to build the Temple of Yahweh (Hag 1:2; Hos 6:4 and 10:2).

In contrast Nehemiah stands out as a

- e. Man of Prayer
- f. Man of Faith
- g. Man of Courage
- h. Man of Action

We must be preoccupied with praising and praying, watching and working, with warring. Warring is overcoming and building. So we must know the answers to these questions:

What is an obstacle course? What is a threshing floor?

What is a proving ground? What is a training ground?

Another meaning for *course* is a complete body of prescribed studies constituting a curriculum and leading toward an advanced degree. This life in community is analogous to a school course with its final examination. The life in community is intended to prepare us for eternity. We must take

advantage of every moment in God's training program and give ourselves to it wholeheartedly. This is the heart of an overcomer.

We must know why Paul said, *I have finished the course* (2 Tim 4:7 and 1 Cor 9:25). *Course* in Greek is 1408 — a race to the end in order to be found approved. This was Paul's career course through life. It is rapid motion, successive development, a movement forward, a steady advance to the goal. But why is the community compared to an obstacle course?

In Heb 12:1 the word *race* is #73 in the Greek. It means to race in a contest, something requiring great effort. It is a fight, a struggle, and it requires stamina. In 2 Tim 4:17 *course* is 1408, meaning a race, figuratively a career, a course. It is a race requiring perseverance to the end. In 1 Cor 9:24 *race* is 4172, meaning a measure of distance (a race course). It is a race, a course, a measure of distance — 49 years. The sun will rise to full day (Rev 12:1).

To *obstruct* is to prevent or greatly impede something by putting an obstacle in its path, as an obstacle race. Satan sets up obstacles, he plans and contrives them. He puts obstacles in the way, which we (the runners) must overcome. When these involve other people we are to turn the other cheek. An example is the landlady. Satan causes her to come over and be rude to us — so if we react to her rudeness she will give us a bad name. She will call the council and when we move the council here will not be able to give us a good report since we reacted to the landlady instead of turning the other cheek, etc., and given a soft answer. We were set up to be made to stumble by our reaction.

A *set up* is an arrangement of circumstances to make a trap for us. A set up is arranged to entrap and or make one look guilty. To *compose* is to invent, make up, arrange the right circumstances to provoke to anger. It is orchestrated by the craft, schemes, devices of Satan (Eph 6:10-11). It is done in our midst through the strategies and the deceits of the evil one through his servants who creep in unawares.