

## Nehemiah's Struggle

### Neh 4:1-6

But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.<sup>2</sup> And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish -- stones that are burned?"

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall."

4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity!<sup>5</sup> Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.

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. NKJV

In any good thing there will be opposition to what you are trying to do. We see it in our lives and so did Nehemiah. Just because he was able to successfully speak to the king and secure the finances and the authority that he needed to start this monumental task did not mean that everything else would be smooth sailing.

We sort of tell ourselves this little lie. We say once we get to that point it will be easy after that. But then most of us never get to that point. There are always challenges to face in life. Once David defeated the giant, life did not get easier but only harder.

So it is with Nehemiah. Once he get to Jerusalem, he waits for three days before he takes a mid-night tour of the walls and they are worse that he had expected. But he is able to convince the people to build and they worked very hard together to start the work.

But then the enemies show up. They mock the people building the wall, hoping that ridicule will be an effective tool. And it usually is. And it seems that what their enemies say is true. And there will be more trouble. This is only the first step in the plan to defeat them.

So let us look at what unfolds as Nehemiah leads the people to success against their foes.

- I. There are always opponents to the work of the Lord.
  - A. They may come from different places but they have a common goal.
    1. Satan is the real enemy in this life.
    2. It helps us with perspective to keep that in mind.
    3. He has many helpers from all sorts of areas of the political and sociological spectrum.
      - a. Sanballat was the political leader of the area of Samaria. He lived

like a Jew and wanted them to think he was on their side.

- b. His daughter had married the son of the High Priest, probably the highest office now among the Jews.
- c. He even has his own private room in the temple.

B. They use different methods to oppose the work.

1. First they threaten them with governmental intervention.

- a. Ne 2:18–20 So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to this good work. 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?” 20 So I answered them, and said to them, “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.” NKJV

2. Then comes today’s passage where they try to mock them.

- a. Nehemiah 4:1 But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.<sup>2</sup> And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish -- stones that are burned?" 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall."

3. Then comes the threat of violence.

- a. Nehemiah 4:7-8 (NKJV) 7 Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, 8 and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion.

4. They conspire against Nehemiah personally.

- a. Neh 6:1 Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), 2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together among the villages in

the plain of Ono.” But they thought to do me harm.

5. They try to get him into a compromising situation that indicate he was a coward.
  - a. Ne 6:10–13; 10 Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you.”  
11 And I said, “Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!”  
12 Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

C. Sometimes the enemies are from within. Neh 5

1. The nobles were oppressing and collecting interest on loans the people had made to just survive and pay their taxes.
2. They were losing their land and even their children to their own leaders who seemed to have no compassion for their fellow Jews.

D. Sometimes people just get discouraged.

1. Nehemiah 4:10 (NKJV) 10 Then Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall."

II. Prayer is the first response.

A. The answer to these sneers was prayer. The language these two enemies used was provoking, but Nehemiah's refuge is prayer. Hezekiah did the same when the Assyrian taunted him and defiled the God of Israel. It is another of the brief ejaculatory prayers of Nehemiah. There are seven of them in this book: chapters 2:4; 4:4-6; 5:19; 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29. Annotated Bible, The - The Annotated Bible – Volume 3: Ezra to Psalms.

B. Prayer was Nehemiah's strength and power.

1. Nehemiah 2:4 (NKJV) 4 Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.
2. Nehemiah 4:4-6 (NKJV) 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! 5 Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted

out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders. 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.

3. Nehemiah 4:9 (NKJV) 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.
4. Nehemiah 5:19 (NKJV) 19 Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.
5. Nehemiah 6:9 (NKJV) 9 For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." **Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.**
6. Nehemiah 6:14 (NKJV) 14 My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.
7. Nehemiah 13:14 (NKJV) 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!
8. Nehemiah 13:22 (NKJV) 22 Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!
9. Nehemiah 13:29 (NKJV) 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

III. But he also encouraged the people.

- A. Our God will fight for us." 4:20
- B. Heb 3:12-15 12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." NKJV
- C. Heb 10:23-25 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. NKJV