

**Nehemiah 4:1** ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

**Nehemiah 4:2** And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

**Nehemiah 4:3** Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

When Sanballat heard that the wall was being rebuilt, he was angry and began to mock the Jews. He basically told his people and the army of Samaria that the Jews weren't up to their task. He accused them of being too weak and placed too much faith in sacrifices to their God. He mocked them for thinking they could use stones from the ruins of the wall that had been burned down. His friend Tobiah joined in by implying that even a fox would be able to knock down any part of "their" stone wall.

Guzik pointed out that the enemy didn't realize that the wall was not just "their" stone wall; it was God's wall being built according to His will in the land He had claimed as His own for His people. In mocking His people, they were mocking God.

That is a principle that holds true for any and all of those that have placed their faith in the LORD. When we are mocked or persecuted because we have chosen to follow the LORD in faith and obedience, He takes that personally as against Him. The LORD made that clear to Saul when He appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

*Acts 9:1–5 "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest...."*

**Nehemiah 4:4** Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

**Nehemiah 4:5** And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders.

**Nehemiah 4:6** So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

Since this is Nehemiah's journal, I assume it is his response in prayer to God that is recorded here. Notice that he didn't bother responding to the taunts of their enemies; he just took the matter straight to the LORD in prayer. After reminding the LORD that they were despised by the surrounding nations, he asked the LORD to turn the insults of their enemies against them and give them over as

spoil to their enemies.

I liked JFB's comment: "The imprecations invoked here may seem harsh, cruel, and vindictive; but it must be remembered that Nehemiah and his friends regarded those Samaritan leaders as enemies to the cause of God and His people, and therefore as deserving to be visited with heavy judgments. The prayer, therefore, is to be considered as emanating from hearts in which neither hatred, revenge, nor any inferior passion, but a pious and patriotic zeal for the glory of God and the success of His cause, held the ascendant sway."

Nehemiah notes that the wall was halfway completed at this time due to the diligent work of the people.

**Nehemiah 4:7 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,**

**Nehemiah 4:8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.**

**Nehemiah 4:9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.**

When Sanballat and the rest of the enemies of the people of Israel heard that such progress was being made in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and repairing its the breaches, they plotted to make an attack against the people of Israel to stop any further progress.

I liked Spurgeon's comment: "If a work has no opposition from Satan, we may be half afraid it is good for nothing. If you cannot make the devil roar, you have not done him much harm; but the more he roars, the more cause is there for the angels singing the praises of God before the throne."

Nehemiah states that they continued to pray for God's mercy and protection, while also appointing guards to serve day and night in light of potential attack. It's important to note that though dependent upon God, they knew it was important to make their own preparations for battle.

I liked Guzik's comment: "Our prayers do not replace our actions; they make our actions effective for God's work."

**Nehemiah 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.**

**Nehemiah 4:11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.**

**Nehemiah 4:12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.**

**Nehemiah 4:13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their**

**spears, and their bows.**

Judah began to voice discouragement, stating that the workers were losing strength and stamina and that there was too much rubbish impeding their work.

Another good comment from Guzik: "In our Christian life, nothing much can be built for God's glory unless rubbish is swept away as well. Taking out the garbage can be discouraging work - but it must be done."

Judah also revealed that their enemies didn't think they would be prepared for an attack. The Jews that lived close by joined him in repeating that they had also heard plans of an attack. The fact that they kept repeating the threat shows that they were frightened too or they supported Sanballat in trying to instill fear into the people.

Nehemiah's response was calm and wise, meant to keep the people from getting discouraged. He positioned people around the wall armed with swords, spears and bows to protect their families as they worked. He was determined not to let the threats of the enemy stop their work.

**Nehemiah 4:14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.**

**Nehemiah 4:15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.**

Nehemiah urged the people not to be afraid of their enemies. Instead, they should remember that they were doing the work of the LORD God Almighty. They should prepare to fight for their families and homes, placing their trust in God.

When their enemies heard that the people were aware of their plans and that God had frustrated their intentions, they realized such a plan would no longer work. Everyone returned to work on the wall according to their assignments.

**Nehemiah 4:16 ¶ And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Judah.**

**Nehemiah 4:17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon.**

**Nehemiah 4:18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.**

From that time on, half the people worked while the other half served as armed guards. Some even worked with one hand while holding a weapon in the other.

All the builders had a sword strapped to his side. The man assigned to sound the warning trumpet was stationed by Nehemiah.

**Nehemiah 4:19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.**

**Nehemiah 4:20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.**

**Nehemiah 4:21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.**

Nehemiah urged the people on, reminding them that the work was great and that they were widely separated on the wall. So, if they heard the sound of the trumpet, they were to rally to the place of sounding. This seems to indicate that there was more than one trumpeter positioned on the wall. He encouraged them and told them that God would fight for them. So the work continued throughout the whole day under the protection of an armed guard.

**Nehemiah 4:22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.**

**Nehemiah 4:23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that every one put them off for washing.***

Nehemiah also instructed the people to spend the nights inside the city of Jerusalem under the protection of those serving as guards at night. He noted that no one even changed clothes except to wash.

The NIV is a bit different: *“Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.”*

The main point, I think, is that they were so focused on the task at hand that they changed their routine to ensure that they were always dressed and ready for battle.

I liked JFB’s summary: *“God, when He has important public work to do, never fails to raise up instruments for accomplishing it, and in the person of Nehemiah, who, to great natural acuteness and energy added fervent piety and heroic devotion, He provided a leader, whose high qualities fitted him for the demands of the crisis. Nehemiah’s vigilance anticipated every difficulty, his prudent measures defeated every obstruction, and with astonishing rapidity this Jerusalem was made again ‘a city fortified.’”*

I liked this comment from Matthew Henry: *“We must watch always against spiritual enemies, and not expect that our warfare will be over till our work is ended.”*