

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 7TH-8TH, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

THE WALL (NEHEMIAH 3:1-32)

THE NORTHERN WALL (V1-5)

The 1st workers mentioned were the priests. This shows that **rebuilding the city was a spiritual act in which all followers of God should be engaged. This part of the wall was dedicated, but the entire wall wasn't until its completion.**

- V5 says some "nobles did not lift a finger," reminding us that **some will feel they're too good for hard work.**

THE WESTERN WALL (V6-14)

We learn that people were responsible for the wall directly in front of their homes or place of business. From this, we learn that **we should help others, but that our homes must first be in order.**

- We also see that both genders and all ages were involved (v12). This shows us that **everyone is important and should contribute.**

THE EASTERN WALL (V15-32)

In this section, we see a lot of merchants, Levites (pastors), and influential people doing their part in the rebuilding of the wall.

- This lets us know that **no matter how affluent or influential we may become, we are never above serving and doing the hard work.**

GOOD PRINCIPLES EVEN IN BORING LISTS

- Everyone is important, and everyone should contribute to the community.
- Everyone has a purpose.
- We are to be united so we can get more accomplished for God and others.
- We should work hard because it glorifies God and strengthens the reputation of the church.
- We should encourage others.

SLANDER (NEHEMIAH 4:1-3)

"...HE BECAME FURIOUS"

When Sanballat heard that the Jews were rebuilding the wall, his anger progressed to the point of slander and public mockery.

- Sanny was angry because the Jews posed a **threat to his power and status** in that area. So, he talked trash in front of "his colleagues and powerful men (army) of Samaria."

WORDS MATTER

What we say and how we say it matters when it comes to talking about other people. Sanny not only thought the rebuilding of the wall was too tough, but that the Jews were inferior and incapable.

- Lk. 6:45 says, "**we speak from an abundance of the heart.**" The words that we speak are a barometer of the heart.

THE MOST UNRULY MEMBER

James 3:1-12 tells us that the tongue is the most destructive or edifying part of our body.

- As Christians, **we must ask and allow God to get control of our words because being filled with His Spirit is the only way to speak in a way that glorifies God and edifies others.** This is one of our biggest issues.

INFLUENCE MATTERS

Tobiah was under the authority and influence of Sanballat, therefore he acted like the one who influenced him, also mocking the Jews.

- **Not only do we need to be wise about what voices influence us, we need to be careful that our words are edifying and God-honoring and not slanderous (Devil) or accusatory (Satan).**

THE RESPONSE (NEHEMIAH 4:4-6)

TURNING IN THE PROPER DIRECTION

Instead of lashing out at his naysayers, Nehemiah turns to God in prayer. Nehemiah was more concerned for the reputation of his people than for himself.

- People have criticized Nehemiah's prayer for sounding harsh, but Nehemiah understood that **vengeance belongs to God** (Rom. 12:19).

"LET THEM BE TAKEN AS PLUNDER"

Nehemiah asked God to do to the neighboring areas what was done to them: taken captive and stripped of all their belongings. Though this sounds harsh, the hardships that fell on the Jews were what needed to happen for them to get back on track spiritually.

- Sometimes we must pray the difficult prayer, "**Whatever it takes...**"

HE LEFT THE RESULTS TO GOD

Though Nehemiah didn't get instant justice for the unfair things said about him, **he left the problem and enemy in God's hands.** Nehemiah also had a job to do and **couldn't afford to wallow in offense and anger.**

- **God sees everything we do, and He is a fair Judge that will reward and punish righteously. We need to rest in that.**

OBSTACLES (NEHEMIAH 4:7-14)

FROM TALKING TO ACTING OUT

Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites went from slandering the Jews to plotting to "fight against Jerusalem and throw it into confusion."

- These groups of people encompassed every direction around Jerusalem. The Jews had enemies in literally every direction.

USING FEAR TO DIVIDE THE PEOPLE

Sanballat organized a propaganda campaign of sorts to scare the Jews and distract them from what God wanted them to do. Apparently, the constant threat was wearing the Jews down.

- **We live in a culture that also uses fear to control, distract, and confuse.** This is why **we must be grounded in the Bible and rely on Christ for our identity and hope.**

A TIME TO DEFEND THE PEOPLE (V13)

Though Nehemiah depended on God through prayer, he also knew that he had to prepare the people to protect each other and their homeland. So, some people were strategically placed with bows, spears, and swords.

- Ecc. 3:8 tells us that **there is a time for war**, and Rom. 12:18 tells us to **live at peace with others if possible.**

BUT, IT WAS STILL IN GOD'S HANDS

Though Nehemiah encouraged the Jews to "fight for your countrymen, your sons and daughters, your wives and homes," he still knew that their protection was all up to God.

- **We must work to balance dependency on God and our responsibility to provide and protect for the ones we are responsible for.**

ALWAYS ON GUARD (NEHEMIAH 4:15-23)

THE STRATEGY WORKED

The Jews' enemies heard that they were taking their threats seriously and withdrew from any plans to attack. Nehemiah gives the credit to God for "frustrat[ing]" their plans.

- Though they returned to rebuilding the wall, they were wise and kept half of the people armed and guarding the city.

HARD AND STRESSFUL TIMES

The men that carried the supplies also carried a weapon just in case of attack, and the man assigned to blow a trumpet to warn the people stayed near Nehemiah.

- Nehemiah was honest about the times ahead saying, "The work is enormous and spread out." **Rebuilding the community is never quick or easy, but it is worth it.**

"STAND GUARD BY NIGHT AND WORK BY DAY"

Nehemiah had trained the Jews to work hard, smart, and to keep an eye out because the enemy is always lurking. V23 says, "Each carried his weapon," indicating that everyone had to take responsibility for the safety and improvement of the community.

- 1 Pt. 5:8 says, "**be sober and alert**" because **Satan is always looking for an opportunity.**

A COLLECTIVE BODY

- Are we as individuals doing our part to build up the community? Or, are we just tearing others down?
- Does complaining, arguing, blame-shifting, and name calling edify God, the church, or yourself? Is it restoring or breaking down? Is it making the community better?

GUARDS AND WORKERS

- We're the guards and workers of God's Kingdom. If we're to effectively build up the community and bring more people into a relationship with Jesus, **we must first make sure our minds and hearts are protected and covered by God's Spirit.**

- Like Nehemiah was aware of nearby evil, **are we cautious about what is around us?**

ALWAYS READY

- Eph. 6 tells us to be armed with **salvation** (relationship with Jesus), **righteousness** (what is moral), **truth, the Bible, faith, and peace.**
- Praying, reading the Word and obeying it, and trusting **Christ will enable us to capture evil thoughts, which prevents evil actions, which gives us peace, and in turn blesses and protects others.**