

Nehemiah 04 - External Threats: Ridicule, Threats of Violence; Internal Threats: Discouragement, Fear

I. Rebuilding of the wall (Neh 1:1—7:73)

(2) Nehemiah rebuilds the wall despite much opposition (Neh 3:1—6:19)

(B) Opposition to the rebuilding of the wall (Neh 4:1—6:19)

(a) External threats (4:1-9)

(i) Ridicule from Sanballat and Tobiah (4:1-6)

(a) Attack: ridicule (4:1-3)

(b) Answer: Nehemiah's imprecation (4:4-6)

(ii) Threat of violence (4:7-9)

(a) Attack: conspiracy to commit violence (4:7-8)

(b) Answer: posting a guard (4:9)

(b) Internal threats (Neh 4:10—5:19)

(i) Discouragement (4:10-23)

(a) Attack: discouragement (4:10-12)

(b) Answer: encouragement through reminders of God's sovereignty and strategic defensive planning (4:13-23)

Neh 3 might give the impression that once Nehemiah had carefully assigned everyone to a particular section of the wall, from that time on everything progressed smoothly. Not so! God's work seldom goes forward without opposition. This chapter recounts several forms of opposition and how Nehemiah confronted them.

Nehemiah 4

(B) Opposition to the rebuilding of the wall (Neh 4:1—6:19)

(a) External threats (4:1-9)

(i) Ridicule from Sanballat and Tobiah (4:1-6)

(a) Attack: ridicule (4:1-3)

1 Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became **furious and very angry**, and he mocked the **Jews**.

1 Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews.

1 When Sanballat heard that we were reconstructing the wall, he flew into a rage, became indignant, and mocked the Jews.

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.

- "...furious and very angry" - Sanballat and Tobiah were first "deeply disturbed" when they heard a man wanted to help the people of Jerusalem (2:10); then they used scorn and intimidation to prevent work from starting (2:19). How that the work had begun, they were "furious and very angry".

— Because Nehemiah did in fact have legal protection from the king (via the letters mentioned in 2:7), Sanballat and Tobiah had no legal authority to actually stop the work. All they could do is discourage the Jews from continuing the work.

— This exact same attack comes into the life of a believer who is legally set free by his King. Yet they can be discouraged from completing the work God gave them to do.

— We work differently when we believe than when we are discouraged. We pray differently whether we're under faith or under discouragement. We read and hear the Word differently under faith or under discouragement. It is no wonder that Satan works so hard to keep us from faith and deep us discouraged.

- "...Jews" - after the Babylonian captivity, the terms "Jew" and "Israelite" are used interchangeably

— Ezra calls the returning remnant "Jews" 8x and "Israel" 40x. (Ezra also speaks of "all Israel": Ezra 2:70; 3:11; 8:35; 10:25, et al.)

— Nehemiah uses the term "Jew" 11x and "Israel" 22x. Nehemiah too speaks of "all Israel" being back in the land (12:47). The remnant that returned from Babylon is represented as "the nation" (Mal 1:1, et al.).

The same is true in the NT. Our Lord is said to have offered Himself to the nation, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:5-6; 15:24). Tribes other than Judah are mentioned specifically in the NT as being represented in the land. Anna knew her tribal identity was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). Paul knew he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a "Jew" and an "Israelite" (Rom 11:1). The NT speaks of "Israel" 70x [KJV] and uses the word "Jew" 196x [KJV]. At the Feast of Pentecost Peter cries, "Ye men of Judea" (Acts 2:14), "ye men of Israel..." (Acts 2:22), and "All the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36).

2 And he spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy people of Samaria and said, "What are these **feeble** Jews doing? Are they going to restore *the temple* for themselves? **Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish it in a day? Can they revive the stones from the heaps of rubble, even the burned ones?"**

2 He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy *men* of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore *it* for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?"

2 He addressed his allies and the Samaritan officials, saying "What are these pathetic Jews doing? Are they intending to rebuild it by themselves? Do they intend to offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a single day? Can they make stones from this burned out rubble?"

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?

- "...feeble" - 'mill, occasionally used to denote a withering plant (Cf. Is 16:8; 24:7); it is also used of people without any hope (Is 19:8; Hosea 4:3). It is used here to ridicule the Jews.

- "...Can they offer sacrifices?" - has the idea of will they seek God through sacrifice and expect Him to miraculously build the walls?

- "...Can they finish *it* in a day?" - do you have any idea how large of a project you're taking on?

- "...Can they revive the stones from the heaps of rubble, even the burned ones?" - when limestone is subjected to intense heat it becomes unstable for building. Sanballat and his cronies believed that even if the wall was rebuilt, it wouldn't stand the test of time and would be weak.

— Lying, discouraging attacks will often have some truth to them, but they neglect the great truth that God was with them and promised to see them through.

— Discouragement is the opposite of faith. Faith believes God, His love, and His promises, while discouragement looks for and believes the worst case scenario and tends to forget about who God is and what He has promised to do.

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* near him, and he said, "Even what they are building—if a fox were to jump *on it*, it would break their stone wall down!"

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* near him and he said, "Even what they are building—if a fox should jump *on it*, he would break their stone wall down!"

3 Tobiah the Ammonite stood to the side, commenting, "If a fox were to jump onto what they're building, it would collapse their stone wall!"

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.

- They mocked the materials used (v2) and the construction, thinking that even a light-footed fox, known for inhabiting ruins (Cf. Ezek 13:4) would be able to destroy the wall because of its lack of cohesion.

- Critics who bring only discouragement often miss what God is doing. Because they don't like the wall, they can't believe it is God's work.

Like most habitual critics, Sanballat and Tobiah were threatened by the thought of change and saw it as something to be resisted. Also like most critics, they looked at the situation only from the human point of view—they didn't take into consideration that this just might be God's plan. [Swindoll]

(b) Answer: Nehemiah's imprecation (4:4-6)

4 Hear, O our God, how we are *an object of contempt*! Return their taunting on their own heads, and turn them into plunder in a land of captivity.

4 Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity.

4 "Listen, our God, because we are being mocked. Let their insults fall back on them, and let them be dragged away as captives into exile.

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, on his ladder doing the work, did not debate, he didn't form a committee to meet with the enemy, he didn't even deal with the enemies directly. He prayed and kept working. Prayer was his first resource, not his last resort.

— When times of opposition come, God wants us to rely on Him and the purest way to do that is by taking it to Him in prayer.

- Nehemiah's imprecatory prayer (a prayer that asks God to send harm or punishment on evildoers) was based on God's promises to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3...that God would bless those who bless Israel, and curse those who curse Israel. Nehemiah prayed for God to follow through on His promise.

— Examples of imprecatory prayers are found in Ps 44; 58:6; 69:25; 74; 79; Jer 18:23.

Notice that these prayers, including those of Nehemiah, do not pray evil upon the enemy, but turning them over to a good and just God because He knows exactly what to do with them.

5 Do not forgive their guilt and do not let **their sin** be wiped out **before You**, for they have demoralized the builders.

5 Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.

5 Don't atone their iniquity, and don't let their sin be blotted out from before you, because they have demoralized the builders."

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.

- Prayer was a distinct and consistent part of Nehemiah's approach to problem-solving.

When faced with Sanballat's demoralizing attack, he immediately asked God for help: Hear us, O our God, for we are despised.

— Like some of the imprecatory prayers in which the psalmists invoked God's condemnation on His enemies, Nehemiah's prayer in this instance was severe and condemning. He prayed that Sanballat and his cohorts would be taken captive and that they would be judged for their sins.

- "...their sin" - ridiculing the work God had commanded (not all of their sins)

— This prayer was not a vindictive because the Jews were insulted, but because God's work was ridiculed. So to rightly understand this prayer by Nehemiah, we need to fully appreciate the divine purpose involved in rebuilding the wall so that the opposition is not seen in human terms, but as opposition to God Himself.

- "...before You" - we need to understand, as noted above, that the sin of Sanballat and Tobiah was against God, not against Nehemiah and the other Jews who were rebuilding the wall. They are His (God's) enemies, not merely Nehemiah's, and the Nehemiah counted on God to deal with them.

- How should a Christian interpret this kind of praying, especially in view of what Jesus Christ said about praying for one's enemies (Matt 5:44; Cf. Rom 12:14,20)? Several facts need to be noted:

1. In opposing the Jews, Sanballat and company were actually opposing God.
2. God had already pronounced judgment on Israel's enemies. Nehemiah was praying according to God's will—that God would deliver Jerusalem from her enemies (Joshua 1:5).
3. Nehemiah was praying that God would bring about what He had promised Abraham regarding those who curse His people (Gen 12:3).
4. Vengeance belongs to God, not to Nehemiah or other believers (Cf. Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19).

6 So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together to half its *height*, for **the people had a mind to work**.

6 So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its *height*, for the people had a mind to work.

6 So we rebuilt the wall, completing it halfway up, because the people were committed to working.

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.

- "...the people had a mind to work" - after praying, Nehemiah and the Jews continued the work. This was the first answer to Nehemiah's prayer: that the people paid no attention to the ridicule of the enemy and just kept on working. No significant job will ever be accomplished until people join together with "a mind to work."

— What Satan wants to do with his attacks, especially discouragement and ridicule, is to neutralize the believer. He wants us to feel defeated, passive, self-focused, and discouraged, and lose their mind to work. He wants to distract us into complacency, paralyze us into doing nothing.

— Some Christians pray and then wait for things to happen, but not Nehemiah! He faced Sanballat's opposition with both prayer and hard work. Once he committed the problem to the Lord, he trusted God to help them achieve their goal. And while praying and trusting, they rebuilt the wall to half its height.

— We often miss God's answer to our prayers because we pray for Him to do a work in the lives of others, but He answers by doing a work in our own life.

At this juncture their task was half completed. Sanballat and Tobiah's efforts at demoralizing the Jews failed. The Jews rose above their enemies' attempts at discouragement. Because the people worked so diligently and enthusiastically (with all their heart), they were able to complete half the job in a surprisingly short period of time. Nehemiah wrote later (6:15) that the entire task was completed in 52 days (about eight weeks of 6 days each), so possibly this halfway point took about four weeks.

Well begun is half done. — Ben Franklin

1. Opposition expresses negative emotions from the threat of something to lose (v1,7)
2. The opposition does diabolical doubt (v2-3)
3. The opposition isn't entirely incorrect (v2)
4. Opposition grows, and conspires to create confusion (v7-8)
5. Opposition easily moves from external to internal (v10)
6. The opposition ramps up the threat level (v11)

How to overcome opposition:

1. Take it to God, not your critics (v4-5); don't answer, respond or argue about it
2. Get moving in the right direction (v6)
3. Be prayerful and practical (v9)
4. Endure the most painful critics (v12)
5. Remember God's faithfulness in the past (v14)
6. Fight for a better future (v14)

(ii) Threat of violence (4:7-9)

(a) Attack: conspiracy to commit violence (4:7-8)

7 Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the **repair** of the walls of Jerusalem went on, *and* that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry.

7 Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, *and* that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry.

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repair work on the Jerusalem wall was progressing and that its breaches were being repaired, they flew into a rage.

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 wrath,

- With the added opposition of the Ashdodites from the west, the Jews' enemies surrounded them on all sides

- "...repair" - *'ărûkâ*, literally, the restoration or "healing" of the walls

8 So all of them conspired together to come to fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.

8 All of them conspired together to come *and* fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.

8 So they all conspired together to invade and fight against Jerusalem, creating confusion there.

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

- The enemies had a calculated, coordinated effort to disrupt and stop the rebuilding process

— They didn't merely harbor anger at those rebuilding, they took deliberate steps to organize a collective assault against the city. This was a coalition of enemies intent on preventing the restoration of God's covenant community in Jerusalem.

— Josephus wrote that "they slew many of the Jews" [*Antiquities*, 11:5:8]

(b) Answer: posting a guard (4:9)

9 **But we prayed to our God**, and because of them **we set up a guard** against them **day and night**.

9 But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

9 But we prayed to our God. We also set up guards day and night because of them.

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

- "But we prayed to our God" - nothing stopped them from depending on God through prayer. They may have given up, believing the continued and escalating attack was a failure on God's part to answer their previous prayers—but they had more faith in God than that (do you?).

— God allowed the attacks to go on, and escalate, even though He could have easily swept them away. He allowed them because He was delighted that His people drew closer to Him with a deeper trust than ever before. God's perfect work was in building up both the walls and His people.

- "...we set up a guard" - the fact that they prayed didn't mean they didn't have to *do* anything else. They still had to use their sanctified common sense to do what was physically necessary to protect against attack.

— The willing servants of God, the guard, were the temporary wall until the physical wall was fully rebuilt

— The setting up of a guard around the clock shows practical wisdom combined with spiritual reliance. This is an important biblical principle: trust/faith in God must be matched by responsible stewardship and alertness (Cf. 1 Peter 5:8).

— This is often a balancing act for Christians...prayerful dependence on God, coupled with vigilance, determination, and perseverance. We are called to blend prayer with action.

— Ridicule can be countered by prayer alone, but armed resistance requires both prayer and physical defense. Our prayers do not replace our actions, they make our actions effective for God's word.

- "...day and night" - this shows determination. Nehemiah was not allow the security of daylight or the sleepiness of night keep him from the work. This sent a powerful message to both God's people, to the enemy, and to God Himself.

— The message to God's people was that we are committed, success is ours for the taking. We will not be stopped and will do whatever it takes to ensure security for the workers so that work will continue.

— It sent a powerful message to the enemy that they would not be successful. God's people were aware of their schemes and were prepared to not see them success. God's work will continue and it's not going to stop. We will do whatever it takes to get this done.

— It also sent a message to God of trust, reliance, and faith in Him, backed up by action. It demonstrated a living faith, an active faith, not just a mind faith or a faith of words.

- The applications to our lives in Nehemiah are numerous...in this case, if you have an area of your life that needs particular attention...a habitual sin, for instance...it isn't enough to pray. You need to set a watch as well by giving special attention and accountability to that area of your life until you are walking in consistent victory.

(b) Internal threats (Neh 4:10—5:19)

(i) Discouragement (4:10-23)

(a) Attack: discouragement (4:10-12)

10 And so in Judah it was said: "The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet **there is much rubble**; And **we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall.**"

10 Thus in Judah it was said, "The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall."

10 Meanwhile, the people of Judah said, "The builders are tired and there's so much rubble that we can't reconstruct the wall!"

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.

- The external opposition began to discourage the Jews, especially those in the tribe of Judah. The escalation by the enemies (v7-8) struck fear in them.

— This demonstrates that often times leaders have a dual role of keeping their enemies at bay and at the same time dealing with internal fear and discouragement.

— Those who get easily discouraged are often doubters and compromisers. There is usually something wrong in their walk with the Lord. They lack faith in God's Word, and they are primarily interested in their own plans and pursuits. When they get the sense that things are going to get difficult, they don't press on in faith but rather they become self-centered, concerned that they aren't going to get what they set out to get by participating in the first place.

— FDR, in his first inaugural address on March 4, 1933, in the midst of an economic depression, said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." What wise words! Fear paralyzes you, it is contagious, and it then paralyzes others. Fear and faith cannot live together in the same heart (Cf. Matt 8:26). Fearful people discourages others and bring defeat (Cf. Deut 20:8).

- "...there is much rubble" - rebuilding the wall was only half the job; the rubble from the previous wall that was destroyed, that had sat for over 100 years, needed to be removed. They had been a collecting point for all kinds of rubbish.

— Clearing away the rubble had to be done...it was not an option. If the rubble was not cleared away, the foundation of the wall could not be exposed. And it was the foundation of the wall that they needed to rebuild on, otherwise the wall would not stand.

— Nothing solid, valuable, or worthwhile can be built on rubble. This holds true for our lives. We can't build something that glorifies God until the rubble, the past remnants that have been destroyed, have been cleared away. Taking out the garbage is not fun work, and it can be discouraging, but it is necessary work.

- "...we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall" - the reconstruction had reached a point where the excavation work had to begin. Often the work of building is a lot more fun and rewarding than the work of cleaning up.

- The halfway point (Cf. v6) in any large project is a dangerous time. Much work remains to be done, but fatigue sets in and challenges multiply. But it isn't enough to just begin well, as many teams have a great first half only to lose the game in the closing minutes. The job isn't done, now is the time to finish well.

11 And our enemies said, "They will not know or see until we come among them, **kill them**, and put a stop to the work."

11 Our enemies said, "They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work."

11 Our enemies said, "Before they notice or see us, we'll penetrate their midst, kill them, and stop the work!"

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.

- Verse 10 was the low-point for the motivation of those doing the work. Things were bad, and the discouraged workers felt like giving up. On top of that, now the enemies were planning a secret raid to kill the workers.

— It's likely that these enemies were not aware of the discouragement and fatigue that had come over the workers (v10), but the counsels of spiritual darkness in high places knew...and the attack was planned. The darkness knew that Israel's state of discouragement made victory for evil possible.

— How much more do these same spiritual enemies know when we are discouraged, tired, angry, or self-confident? They know exactly the right time to launch a surprise spiritual attack against us that will sideline us in sin or neutralize our faith in God.

- "...kill them" - shows the length (attack and killing) that the enemy was willing to go to stop the construction of the wall

— In a way, this is a backhanded compliment. The enemy knew that the only way to get them to stop serving God by rebuilding the wall was to eliminate them completely.

— This, however, cannot be said for many Christians today. For most, the devil does not have to go as far as killing them because discouragement, compromise, money, relationships, frustration, anger, or other trouble can easily sideline their faith and get them to stop serving the Lord.

12 When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, "They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,"

12 When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, "They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,"

12 The Jews who lived near them kept coming to us, reporting at least ten times, "They'll attack us from every direction."

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.

- The enemies were unaware that faithful Jews, who lived near them, heard their plot and warned Nehemiah of it

— Those who overheard the plan did not have the wisdom to know what to do in response, so they panicked and told Nehemiah ten times about the enemies' secret plan to attack and kill them

— The fear of being ambushed became a catalyst for deeper reliance on God. Based on the threat, Nehemiah took decisive action (v13)...

(b) Answer: encouragement through reminders of God's sovereignty and strategic defensive planning (4:13-23)

13 then I stationed *men* in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their **swords, spears, and bows**.

13 then I stationed *men* in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows.

13 So I stationed the people by families behind the wall in the lower exposed areas, equipping them with their swords, spears, and bows.

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.

- Nehemiah responded to these threats by increasing security, and re-focusing the worker's attention again on God (v14). He also reminded them of their duty to protect their families and property (v14).

— Nehemiah didn't simply wait on God for deliverance, he prepared the workers for potential battle while at the same time grounding their courage in the greatness of the Lord.

- "...swords, spears, and bows" - Nehemiah got serious...time to put on the full armor and get ready to fight with every resource they had

14 When I saw *their fear*, I stood and said to **the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people**: "Do not be afraid of them; **remember the Lord who is great and awesome**, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

14 When I saw *their fear*, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight

for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses."

14 Looking things over, I stood up and spoke to the officials, the military leaders, and the rest of the people: "Don't fear them. Remember the great and awe-inspiring Lord. Fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

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.

- "...the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people" - Nehemiah engaged all segments of society so that all would have ownership of the project

— He countered their fear by commanding them to remember Whom they were working for: the Lord. But he didn't stop there...he commanded the fathers to fight for and defend their families.

- "...remember the Lord who is great and awesome" - Nehemiah put things in perspective; He who was in them was greater than he was in the world (Cf. 1 John 4:4).

15 Now when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then **all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.**

15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.

15 Our opponents heard that we had learned about them, that God had brought their plans to failure, and that each and every one of us had come to work on the wall.

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.

- When the enemies saw the defensive posture of the people of God, they shrunk back. Their element of surprise was gone. They didn't want to go to battle because they knew the opposition was prepared for them and that the enemies would lose.

- "...all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work" - this was the victory; peace through strength. Getting on with the work was the victory.

— When we are under spiritual attack, it is sometimes easy to feel that just enduring the storm is the victory. It isn't. The attack often comes to *prevent your progress and work* for the Lord. Victory is enduring the attack *and* continuing the progress and work for the Lord.

16 And from that day *on*, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them kept hold of the spears, the shields, the bows, and the coats of mail; and the captains *were* behind all the house of Judah.

16 From that day *on*, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains *were* behind the

whole house of Judah.

16 From that day on, half of my helpers engaged in the work while the other half kept spears, shields, bows, and armor ready. The senior officials backed all of the Judeans

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 balanced the labor force to include both physical protection with continuing construction. The skilled laborers continued to rebuild, while an armed guard stood ready to defend them.

— This demonstrates Nehemiah's trust in God first and foremost, coupled with practical wisdom

17 Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens carried with one hand doing the work, and the other keeping hold of a weapon.

17 Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took *their* load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.

17 who worked on the wall. Those who carried building materials worked with one hand, carrying a spear in the other.

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.

- The workforce had a delicate balancing act: they must be prepared to defend and fight at any moment, yet also remain committed to completing the project

- The work of God is done with both a sword and a trowel. A sword to protect against every spiritual force of wickedness in high places, and a trowel to do the work of building up the people of God.

18 As for the builders, each *wore* his **sword strapped to his waist** as he built, while **the trumpeter stood** near me.

18 As for the builders, each *wore* his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter *stood* near me.

18 Each builder worked with a sword strapped to his side, while a trumpeter remained beside me to sound an alarm.

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.

- "...sword strapped to his waist" - security was a top priority. Workers bricks and mortar with one hand, while holding a weapon (probably a spear or sword) in the other. Each of the wall-workers (masons) worked with both hands but had his sword at his side.

Though this arrangement meant fewer bricklayers were on the job, and productivity slowed, the workers and the work were well defended!

- "...the trumpeter" - Nehemiah stationed a trumpeter next to him—a man who would follow Nehemiah everywhere he went as he supervised the work.

— In case of an attack, the trumpet blast would rally the people to the area of greatest threat. Rather than scattering in fear, they were to converge and stand firm in the confidence that God Himself was their ultimate Defender.

— Nehemiah reminded them that while every person must do their part, the battle and the victory belong to the Lord

19 And I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another.

19 I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another.

19 I told the officials, rulers, and the rest of the people, "The project is large and extensive, and we are separated from each other on the wall,

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.

20 At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, assemble to us there. Our God will fight for us."

20 At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

20 so wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, come over to us, and our God will fight for us!"

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

21 So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.

21 So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.

21 So we worked hard, half of us holding spears from dawn to dusk.

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

22 At that time I also said to the people, "Each man with his servant shall spend the night within Jerusalem, so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day."

22 At that time I also said to the people, "Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day."

22 At the same time I told the people, "Let's have everyone sleep at night inside Jerusalem with their servants, so they can guard us at night and work during the day.

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.

- The workers who lived outside the city not only labored all day, they remained in Jerusalem as a security force overnight. They didn't return home at night after work because venturing outside Jerusalem at night would have been dangerous.

23 So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me—none of us removed our clothes; each *took* his weapon *even to* the water.

23 So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each *took* his weapon *even to* the water.

23 No one—neither I, my allies, my servants, nor the bodyguards who accompanied me—changed clothes. Everyone carried a weapon even while going for water."

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.

- Through each night some workers stood guard, knowing the city was vulnerable to attack even then. They did not even take off their clothes to clean up after work; they kept a diligent watch at all times.