

# Nehemiah 4

Work and Pray

- Gates finished: All speak of our relationship with Jesus
- **Wall around Jerusalem begins restoration:** Walls speak of God's protection on those who fear Him

**Psalm 34:7** The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him...

- **El Elohim:** The LORD God is my strong protector

## I. Wall Begins: Enemy Attacks

- **Opposition to God's Plan:** Began in the Garden of Eden

God had a wonderful desire for his precious creation  
...to live in an unbroken/unhindered love relationship with their Creator

- **Two placed in Garden:** Perfection. Till the ground. Hang out. Chill.
- Do whatever you want except one thing: Don't eat from that one tree
- **Choice:** Obey and love or Disobey and sin against love
- **Devil adds to equation:** Tempt with lust of eyes, lust of flesh, pride of life

### Questioning God's Goodness, God's Judgment...God's Word

#### 1. Genesis 3: Did God really say...you can't?

- Enemy injecting doubt regarding God's Goodness/Judgment
- Tempting to Question God's Word
- Enemy wins: Buy-in from Eve...

"God has said, 'You shall not eat it, **nor shall you touch it**, lest you die.'"

#### 2. Next, Enemy tempts Eve to completely deny God's Word/Authority

- **You will not surely die!**
- Implying God does not want our best

**Sin enters God's creation...Everything Changes....Eternal struggle begins  
Guilt and Shame cripple our common ancestors...and all that follow**

**Genesis 3:8** And [Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

**Jesus came and fixed what Satan broke  
Now Satan attacks God's People**

**Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed [Jesus and followers]

- Opposition to God's plan in man's life continues today...as in **Nehemiah's day**

There never was a good work yet but what there were some to oppose it, and there never will be till the Lord comes. [Spurgeon]

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.

**Q.** Why so much anger toward the rule of law, righteousness, life and God

**A.** Because Satan hates the rule law, righteousness, life, God and ...God's people

If fighting God is futile enemy will be satisfied attacking, harassing, stumbling God's people

- Nehemiah given the mandate by God to build
- His enemies are given mandate by Satan to destroy
- Devil prowls this earth using demons and human hosts to **destroy**

**John 10:10** The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

**Being offended is a method of controlling people  
Sanballat was furious and very indignant**

**Sanballat mocked the Jews**

**If you can't win an argument with logic...attack the person**

- So your trying to put the wall together? Trying to get your life together?
- **World's response?**
  1. **Furious:** Lit. Became hot; burned. "Who do you think you are?"
  2. **Indignant:** Lit. vexed; provoked to anger. "Did you get religion something?"
  3. **Mocking:** Lit. Scorn/Ridicule and *left with nothing logical to say...*

**2 Timothy 3:12** Yes, and **all** who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

**Mocked for doing what is right? While your lives are falling apart?**

**1 Peter 3:13 [Read]** And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And **do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.**" 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that **when they defame you as evildoers**, those who revile your good conduct in Christ **may be ashamed.** 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

- **We will be persecuted/provoked**

**If you're doing this thing right you will be persecuted and provoked**

- **Answer:** Overcome evil with good

**....that those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed**

- Why are they upset about that you changed for the good?

**1 Peter 4:3 [Read]** For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and

abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, **they think it strange** that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

- **God's work being mocked...Dangerous place to be for the mocker**

**Mark 3:28** "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"— 30 because they said, "**[Jesus] has an unclean spirit.**"

- **Unpardonable Sin:** Attributing Gods work to that which is evil till the day you die
  1. **Saying Jesus power was of Satan**
  2. **Mocking God's work in others as something evil...don't die that way!**

**Mocker...Believers have been put in *your life* for a reason  
That you might have *no excuse***

**Isaiah 28:22** ... [Warning to those who mock Lord's work] **do not be mockers**, Lest your bonds be made strong; For I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, A destruction determined even upon the whole earth.

- Judgment will come to those who mock God's work
- **We are God's workmanship...**

One should always be careful about the way you talk about Jesus' bride. [Guzik]

2 And [Sanballat] spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "**What** are these **feeble** Jews doing?"

**Enemy's schemes:** Doubt/Discouragement leading to unbelief...abandonment God's work

- **Mocking degrades to racism...** Feeble Jews
- Spoke in hearing of those who would jump on board
  1. Brethren
  2. Army of Samaria

Mockers can always find an listening ear  
**"What are these feeble Jews doing?"**

- **They were feeble.** They were weak ...but their God is mighty. He is strong.
- **In my weakness [God] is strong [2 Cor. 12:9]**

**2b...Will** they fortify themselves? **Will** they offer sacrifices? **Will** they complete it in a day?

- How can he change/How can she change:

**2c...Will** they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?"

- *Did God really say He could save someone like you?*

**Isaiah 61:3** To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." 4 And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.

### **Beauty for Ashes is what our Lord does!**

- Hardy has his Laurel
- Abbott has his Costello
- **Sanballat has his Tobiah...**

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."

- Whatever they are doing won't last...

**Sarcasm: It's just a phase. They'll be back to their same old self in no time**

#### **Tobiah's sarcastic rebuke?**

Even if a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall

Such a man as Sanballat never lacks friends. If there is a bad man anywhere, there is sure to be another close at hand. The devil does not make a fire with one stick. When he has set the first one alight, he can generally find another stick to put on it. [Spurgeon]

- **Strategy for annihilating enemy when attacked:**
  1. Be certain you are doing God's will
  2. Never ingest criticism or flattery to deeply

One measure of a leader is to be able to measure criticism; to not allow one to be run down by the critical, while still be sensitive to God's voice even in the midst of criticism. [Guzik]

3. Remember it is a *Spiritual* Battle

**Not by might not by power but by My Spirit says the Lord!**

4. Seek Wisdom of the Lord *immediately*

### **Enemy attacks...Nehemiah seeks the Lord**

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...

**Psalm 69:9** Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

- **Prayer: First not last resort**
- **Nehemiah's Honest Prayer**

1. Turn their words back on them
2. Let them be taken captive by enemies
3. Uncover their sin for all to see
4. Do not forgive their sin

**5b...for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.**

- They have provoked you by provoking us: **This is Your fight Lord!**

**Very important...Ultimately this is God's fight!**

- **Don't forgive them?**

**Psalm 58:6** [David] Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord! 7 Let them flow away as waters which run continually; When he bends his bow, Let his arrows be as if cut in pieces. 8 Let them be like a snail which melts away as it goes...

- Words recorded by individuals do not necessarily reflect the heart of God

**Psalmist:** "Turned both his anger/enemies over to God letting Him deal with them" [NJC]

**Psalm 109:26** Help me, O Lord my God! Oh, save me according to Your mercy, 27 That they may know that this is Your hand— That You, Lord, have done it! 28 Let them curse, but You bless; When they arise, let them be ashamed, But let Your servant rejoice. 29 Let my accusers be clothed with shame, And let them cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle.

- In spite of anger, indignation and mocking God gives strength to continue
- **Our enemies were mad, they provoked us, they mocked us...**

**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.**

**Half its height: Satan desires us to leave God's work half completed**

[Mind to work] This is exactly what Satan wants to destroy with his attacks - the mind to work. He wants to make us feel defeated, or passive, or self-focused, or discouraged. [Guzik]

- Busting through discouragement into the broad place of courage/victory
- **Enemies threatening God's work!!!** Yah and? Anyway...

"Critics demoralize. Leaders encourage. When the critics spoke, the workmen heard them and were demoralized. But when the capable leader stepped up and said, 'Let's look at it God's way, stay at the job,' the crew members were back in there." [Swindoll]

**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.

- Progress made; Enemy enraged

It's not bad to make the devil angry. [Guzik]

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. [Spurgeon]

- **Enemy relentless:** Recruit others
  1. **Sanballat the Horonite**
  2. **Tobiah the Ammonite**
  3. **Various Arabs**
  4. **Ammonites:** Lot and daughters incestuous relationship [Tobiah was one]

### Choose to sin...choose to suffer...

5. **Ashdodites:** Philistines

**Acts 20:29** For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. **31 Therefore watch...**

It is wonderful how unanimous bad men can be. It has always struck me as a very startling thing, that you have never heard of any division among the devils in hell. There are no sects among the devils; they seem to work together with an awful unanimity of purpose in their wicked design. In this one thing they seem to excel the family of God. Oh, that we were as hearty and united in the service of God as wicked men are in the service of Satan! [Spurgeon]

- Hear anger, indignation and mocking were unsuccessful
- **New Strategy:** Create confusion

**1 Corinthians 14:33** For God is not the author of confusion but of peace...

- **Confusion set in** to what you believe you are doing for God...Stop and pray
- **God answers** Nehemiah's prayer by giving the people a "**mind to work**"
- **Nehemiah hears:**
  1. Enemy is preparing to attack
  2. Enemy is preparing to cause confusion

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

- **Watch and Pray:** Enemy is *always* preparing to attack and cause confusion
- Walk in wisdom not ignorant of your surroundings

**Ephesians 5:14** [God warns us] "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." 15 See then that you **walk circumspectly**, not as fools but as wise, 16

redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit

- **Awake:** Rise from your "lifeless" state

### **And Christ will give you light!**

- **Walk circumspectly**...not as fools walking in circles
- **Do not be unwise**...understand what the will of the Lord is!
- **Redeem the time**...days are evil [Our time belongs to God]
- **Don't be drunk/stoned**...be filled with Spirit

**Naivety won't save you. Purposeful Stupidity won't protect you  
"I don't know" are three words not one**

- **Ignorance is not an excuse:**
  1. **Responsible** for what we hear
  2. **Responsible** for what we ignore

Nehemiah knew an attack was imminent and that the enemy sought to confuse  
Blindside/Sucker-punch/Bushwhack/catch unaware/ throw a curveball  
**His instructions to God's people...Watch and Pray**

It isn't hard to imagine some super-spiritual among them saying, "Now Nehemiah, we don't need to set a watch. We have prayed, and God will protect us." Nehemiah would likely respond, "Yes, God will protect us, and He will as He finds us doing our duty before Him. Set the guard." [Guzik]

- **Jesus said Watch and Pray:** Warned us ready. Working while praying His return

**Mark 13:33** Take heed, **watch and pray**

- **Apostle Paul said watch and pray...**

**Ephesians 6:18** pray... always with all **prayer** and supplication in the Spirit, **being watchful...**

- **Peter said watch and pray...**

**1 Peter 4:7** ...the end of all things is at hand; therefore **be serious and watchful** in your **prayers.**

### **Rubber meets the road take-home?**

Devil prowls like a roaring lion Manifested in the Anger, Indignation and mocking of people

- **Enemy is closing in:** Yah and? Anyway...
  1. **Nehemiah prayed:** Direct line to God in Heaven
  2. **Nehemiah watched:** Aware earthly surrounding ready to act on God's Word

## Everything seems to be going swimmingly...

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.**"

- **Challenge from inside the wall:** To much junk...

**Hebrews 12:1b...**let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us

- **Sin is the rubbish/junk in our life**

**We all have junk!**

**1 John 1:8** [Read] If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

### Remedy for removing junk!

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Our junk will pile up if we convince ourselves it is not junk!**

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

**...there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.**

- Rubbish gets in the way of completing God's work. What needs to be gone?
- Rubbish [sin] allows the enemy to hide...

11 And our adversaries said, "They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease."

- **Kill them:** Compliment? Only way to stop them?
- We will hide in their junk and destroy them...

**Hebrews 3:12** [Read] 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.

- **Deceitfulness of sin:**
  1. Begins w/ worn down/weakened by un-dealt with junk [un-confessed sin]
  2. **Danger:** Questioning God's ability finish the work: **Unbelief/Evil Heart**
- Cure to stop digression? Weakness leading to an unbelieving/evil heart

**Exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today"**

- **Exhort:** Call to one's side, admonish, instruct

**Hey what's going on wit you? Get rid of that junk...brother!**

- Different instructions for different situation regarding brother/sister in sin



**Galatians 6:1** Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

**1 Timothy 5:20** Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

**James 5:19** Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

**Matthew 18:15** "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

**Proverbs 27:17** As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

- We are NOT to condone sin in others to make ourselves feel better
- Teriyaki question

**12** So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, **"From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us."**

- **Verbal Intimidation to cause fear:**

The attacks we suffer from spiritual forces of darkness are just as strategically timed. Our spiritual enemies know when we are discouraged, tired, angry, or proud in self-confidence. [Guzik]

- Faithful Jews heart threats and told leadership
- Told us 10 times they were going to attack

**Satan is a bully; How do we deal with bullies...we stand up to them**

**James 4:7** ...submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

- **Only two choices when bullied...**
  1. Fight
  2. Paralyzed by Fear

**13 Therefore...**

- **In response to the enemies...**
  1. The enemies threats
  2. The enemies desire to discourage/create Confusion
  3. The enemies verbal intimidation: Bullying...
  4. Jews discouraging complaint to Nehemiah: Too much junk. Well, clean it

**In response to all this and Nehemiah himself fighting discouragement...  
Nehemiah continued to trust God and lead the people**

**13b...** I positioned men behind the **lower parts of the wall**, at the openings...

- Positioned men in places most exposed to enemy penetration
- **Special Forces/SEAL Team**

1. Nehemiah did not ask for volunteers/vote
2. Nehemiah took note of those who worked well
3. Chose/called them because they had proven themselves; been tested

**1 Timothy 3:10** [Deacons must] first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

**13c...**and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

- **Families:**

1. Building blocks of healthy society
2. Re-defined by world
3. Brutal attack by enemy
4. Nehemiah provide weapons
  - Stay strong
  - Stay together
  - Build each other up

- Word of God provided much guidance [weapons] to families...

**Colossians 3:18** 18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. 20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

**Ephesians 6:1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

- Weapons for victory: Word of God; hearing and doing

**2 Corinthians 10:4** ...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds

- Nehemiah stations Special Forces in most exposed sections of the wall
- Nehemiah keeps families together to provide strength to the whole

**14** And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people...

- **Looked and Arose**

1. **Looked:** Assessed peoples countenance. Temperature; Hot/Cold
2. **Arose:** Realizing fear was setting in
3. **Said:**

**Answer to Nehemiah's previous prayers? Ability to motivate the people**

**14b...** "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

- **Don't be afraid;** i.e. Don't let your enemies live rent free in your mind
- **Remember the Lord;** Great/Awesome: Magnify the Lord
- **Fight for your families:** Forget about yourself

Nehemiah motivates with words that take the focus off little them and onto a Big God  
**Always works if people listen...they did.**

**15** And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

- When bullies are stood up to bullies back down: Hate bullies

**16** So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. **17** Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. **18** Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

- Trowel and the Sword / Working and Watching:

The kingdom of God is built with both a sword and a trowel, a sword to come against every spiritual force of wickedness in high places, and trowel to do the work of building up the people of God. [Guzik]

**19** Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. **20** Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there."

- Work around the entire wall/People spread out

**Nehemiah's instruction** when one is attacked rally to him

**1 Corinthians 12:26** ...if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

- We are not those who shoot our wounded. Jesus our example.

**Matthew 12:20** A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench...

**Matthew 8:2** And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." **3** Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

- When there is trouble we will rally together...

## 20b...Our God will fight for us."

- Nehemiah keeps Spiritual truth at forefront of physical/earthly work

21 So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.

- **12 hours holding spears:** Tedious/necessary work

22 At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day." 23 So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me **took off our clothes**, except that everyone took them off for washing.

- **Left their clothes on:**

**Romans 13:14** ...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

**Galatians 3:27** For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

- **Armor of God all speaks of Jesus**
  1. **Helmet of Salvation:** Jesus the author/finisher of our faith
  2. **Breastplate of Righteousness:** He is our Righteousness
  3. **Belt of Truth:** Jesus the Way, Truth, and Life
  4. **Shoes of Gospel:** Ready to share the Good News of Jesus
  5. **Shield of Faith:** Saved by faith in Jesus not our own goodness
  6. **Sword of the Spirit:** Jesus the Living Word of God

**Left their clothes on: Ready to complete God's work and have victory over enemies**