

Working Together in Mission

Nehemiah 4:6-15; (ESV)

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

⁷ But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. ⁸ And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. ⁹ And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

¹⁰ In Judah it was said, "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall." ¹¹ And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work." ¹² At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, "You must return to us." ¹³ So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴ And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to 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 homes."

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

Nehemiah 6:15-16

¹⁵ So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶ And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

Background:

Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 586 BC by the King Nebuchadnezzar. This marked the third wave of captives being taken to Babylon (the first one was around 605 BC). The prophet Jeremiah had prophesized a 70-year exile (Jeremiah 29:10).

In 536 BC (about 70 years after the first exile in 605 BC), the first group of Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem. With the permissions of King Cyrus of Persia, they began to rebuild the Temple.

Many years later, during the time of Nehemiah, another group of exiles returned to

Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. This rebuilding task was crucial, as it provided security for the nation and allowed them to focus on their covenant relationship with God.

God had sent someone like Nehemiah to accomplish this enormous task, which was completed in just 52 days. In this passage, we see how Nehemiah *worked together in unity* with his fellow Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

When God's people work together, they experience God's help and power.

DISCUSS

1. Nehemiah prayed and acted (4:6-9)

With the wall only half its intended height (v6), the enemies of Israel grew more serious. Now, they did not just complain nor mock, but began a plot to attack and cause confusion in Jerusalem (v7-8). Samballat and Tobiah came from powerful and influential families, and their threats posed a real danger to a city without walls.

Yet as opposition came, Nehemiah and the people responded with both prayer and action. They firstly prayed to "our God", showing a deep trust that God Himself was their ultimate defender. They set a guard day and night, trusting that God works through in ordinary means as well.

Their faith in God was active, expressed through action.

When you face problems or pressure, which do you tend to do more? Pray or act? How can you learn to do both, like Nehemiah and the people, trusting that God works in and through your effort and your dependence on Him?

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2. Nehemiah rallied the discouraged (4:10-14)

Jerusalem faced discouragement both internally and externally.

The internal challenge came from the people's own despair: "In Judah it was said...". They saw that their strength was failing, there was too much rubble to clear, and they felt unable to finish the wall (v10).

The external challenge came from their enemies' threats, to attack, kill and stop the work. They heard fearful voices among fellow Jews living near those nations, urging them to "return to us" (v11-12).

Yet Nehemiah rallied the people. He *stationed* them by their clans and armed them for defense (v13). More importantly, he encouraged them spiritually to "... not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome." (v14).

Nehemiah's leadership rallied the discouraged.

Who might be the "discouraged builders" in God's mission today - missionaries, local pastors, or fellow believers? How can we practically rally and support them?

3. Nehemiah stayed on to finish the task (4:15; 6:15-16)

Nehemiah completed the task in just 52 days. This was remarkably short. The walls were in ruins for over 100 years, but were rebuilt in just 52 days. God had brought a man who prayed, rallied, and stayed on to finish the task given to him.

God used a young layman, who had a comfortable job as the royal cupbearer and was not born in Jerusalem but in Babylon, to accomplish this important task of rebuilding the city walls.

And the nations saw that "that this work had been accomplished with the help of (their) God" (6:16)

God used Nehemiah, a layman in a secular role, for His purposes. How can ordinary believers contribute to God's mission both locally and globally, even if they are not "full-time missionaries"?

Pray For:**1. Faith in Action**

Pray that we, like Nehemiah, would respond to challenges with both trust in God and practical action, relying on Him while faithfully doing our part.

2. Courage to Rally Others

Pray that we would encourage and strengthen fellow believers who feel discouraged in God's mission, pointing them to God's greatness and power

3. Perseverance to Finish Well

Pray for grace to stay committed to God's work, seeing it through to completion, and to glorify Him in both the process and the outcome.