

## Nehemiah 4 Sermon

### Questions for further reflection

In everyone's life there is conflict, discouragement, and fear. What is your typical reaction when bad things happen? Do you pray for God's help or do you try to do it all on your own? Or put another way, is prayer the last thing you try after all else has failed?

"The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people."

Those words from G.K. Chesterton remind us that enemies aren't always nameless, powerful people that prey on Christians. We are tempted to blame the atheists, secular humanists, etc, for all our problems. Usually we are in conflict with our neighbors, family, co-workers, and all the people we bump into!! Loving our enemies is hard and prayer is required!! How can start loving your nearest "enemies"?

In Nehemiah 4:12 other Jews were discouraging those at work on the walls. How do Christians discourage other Christians today? Are there any ways that you yourself might discourage other Christians? (James Hamilton)

The command, "Do not fear" (or worded similarly) is the most frequent "command" in the Bible. Perhaps these frequent reminders are a clue that we need to constantly run to God in the midst of any struggle or conflict. Remember, I John 4:18, "Perfect love casts out fear"!!

In Nehemiah 4:16-17 the people work with a weapon in one hand and a tool in the other. If God's people were to follow this example today, what would be analogous to the weapon, and what would be analogous to the tool?

## Nehemiah 4 Sermon Outline

### Main point

Do not fear but pray and trust in God

### Four Obstacles to Be Overcome

#### **Ridicule** Mockery and Taunts (Nehemiah 4: 1-6)

1. A type of psychological warfare. A germ of truth makes for effective toxic criticism.
  - a. Sanballat seized and exploited real weakness the Jews had.
  - b. The Jews *were feeble!* They *were* in over their heads, etc. (v.2)
2. Satan is our Adversary. He is known as the accuser. Rev 12:10

- a. He uses our fears and doubts against us.
- 3. Antidote. Prayer not personal vengeance. Give it to God and keep working! (vv. 4-6)

### **Threatened Violence - Physical Force** (Nehemiah 4:6-9)

- 1. Escalation of tension. Taunts and mocking failed so Sanballat ratchets up the intensity.
  - a. Another enemy has joined the opposition. Now Jerusalem is surrounded on the north, south, east, and west. (vv 7-9)
  - b. Humanly speaking the situation is hopeless.
- 2. Antidote: You guessed it - prayer! But prayer day and night. And set a watch guard. (v.9)

### **Discouragement** (Nehemiah 4: 10-13)

- 1. "There is too much rubble" The job is overwhelming. There is too much to do. (v.10)
- 2. The opposition knew this and was preparing to attack. (v. 11)
- 3. Those living outside panicked and wanted protection. (v. 12)
- 4. Antidote: Nehemiah was a good leader. He listened and understood the weakness and changed his plans which encouraged the people.

### **Fear** (Nehemiah 4:14)

- 1. Surrounded by opposition? Do not fear
  - a. Easier said than done.
  - b. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome.
  - c. Fight for you families and homes.

### **Spears and Shovels** (Nehemiah 4:15-23)

- 1. Nehemiah changed his plans to protect the city and still build up the wall.
  - a. If you don't have enough people to both build and guard the city then make your workman into part time soldiers. (Nehemiah 4:15-18)
  - b. Instant communication with the use of trumpets (instead of Twitter) (4:19-20)
  - c. Our God will fight for us.
    - i. Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!!
- 2. Everyone worked from dawn to dusk (4:21)
- 3. Those who lived outside Jerusalem stayed in the city. (4.22)
  - a. For protection
  - b. To speed up the building
- 4. Nehemiah and his people were in the middle of everything. 4:23)
  - a. Leading from front. Leading by example