

Building in the Face of Opposition

Mockery as a Weapon (vv. 1–3)

“But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.” (Nehemiah 4:1)

As soon as God’s people began building, the enemy began mocking. Sanballat, Tobiah, and their allies launched a campaign of ridicule to undermine the morale of the workers. “What are these feeble Jews doing?” they sneered. “Even a fox could knock their wall over!” (v. 3)

Mockery remains one of Satan’s favorite tools. It strikes at our insecurities. It’s subtle, personal, and designed to humiliate and discourage. Many believers abandon their calling not because of persecution, but because of ridicule. The enemy whispers, *“Who do you think you are? You’re not good enough. You’ll fail.”*

Nehemiah’s Response: Prayer, Not Panic (vv. 4–6)

“Hear, O our God, for we are despised... for they provoked You to anger before the builders.” (v. 4)

Nehemiah didn’t retaliate—he prayed. He entrusted his enemies to God. His prayer may sound harsh, but it reflects his passion for God’s holiness and his zeal for the work. Sometimes, like David in the Psalms, Nehemiah cried out for justice with raw honesty.

But notice what followed: *“So we built the wall... for the people had a mind to work.” (v. 6)*

Despite the insults, they didn’t stop. The people were united, motivated, and determined. When you have a mind to work for God, even mockery can’t move you.

Escalation: From Words to Threats (vv. 7–9)

When the verbal attacks failed, the enemies moved toward threats and sabotage.

“Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.” (v. 9)

Again, Nehemiah combined prayer with practical wisdom. He didn’t just say, “God will protect us.” He also set guards and made defensive plans. This is a powerful principle for spiritual leadership:

Trust in God never negates responsible action.

Discouragement from Within (vv. 10–12)

“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.’” (v. 10)

Now the problem wasn’t just external opposition, but internal discouragement. The people were exhausted. The work was overwhelming. Fear and fatigue crept in. Even friendly voices began to say, “It’s too much. We can’t go on.”

This is one of Satan's most effective weapons—discouragement. He'll try mockery. He'll try threats. But if he can discourage you from within, he wins without a fight.

Nehemiah's Charge: Remember the Lord (vv. 13–15)

“Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome...” (v. 14)

The cure for fear is remembering who God is. Nehemiah didn't minimize the threat—he maximized the vision of God. *“Great and awesome”* is the kind of language that realigns our hearts with reality. God is still on the throne.

Encouraged by this, the people returned to the wall. The enemy's schemes were exposed, and faith won the day.

Watch and Work (vv. 16–23)

“Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens... with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.” (v. 17)

Nehemiah instituted a brilliant defense system. Half the men worked while the other half stood guard. The workers held tools in one hand and weapons in the other. A trumpeter stood beside Nehemiah so they could all rally when the alarm sounded.

This is a picture of spiritual vigilance:

- The trowel: Your ministry—what God has called you to build.
- The sword: The Word of God—your defense against attack (Eph. 6:17).
- The trumpet: A call to unity—rallying together when under attack.

They worked long hours, rarely even changing clothes, staying ready for action. This was the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy:

“The wall shall be built again, even in troublesome times.” (Daniel 9:25)

And yet, despite the trouble, God's work advanced—because the people had a mind to work, a heart to trust, and hands that were ready.

Personal Application: Building in a Battle Zone

Nehemiah 4 is a blueprint for modern believers:

- Don't be surprised by opposition. When you step out in obedience, expect resistance.
- Respond first with prayer. Nehemiah always prayed before planning.
- Trust God, but take wise precautions. Set your watch and guard the gates.
- Keep working even when mocked. Don't let critics steal your calling.
- Encourage the discouraged. Speak life to weary hearts—*“Remember the Lord, great and awesome.”*
- Hold your trowel and your sword. Build and battle. Serve and stand. Work and watch.

Final Word

God's people are always building in troubled times, but with hearts set on Him and hands ready to serve, we can finish the work He has called us to.

“The God of heaven will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.” (Nehemiah 2:20)