

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## NEHEMIAH 4-6

On my trips to Jerusalem one of my favorite activities is to walk the walls.

At the Joppa Gate you can climb on top of the walls and walk them to the edge of the Temple Mount. Today's walls are 400 years old, built by King Sulieman, on top of the foundations of Nehemiah's walls – but even today Jerusalem's walls project an aura. They appear noble. They're impressive and intriguing.

When God speaks of His love for Jerusalem He mentions her walls.

Isaiah 49:15, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; *your walls are continually before Me.*" When God focuses on His people He looks at her walls...

In a sense Jerusalem's walls were to the Jews what the World Trade Center was to our nation. The Twin Towers were the epitome of American know-how.

The splendid splinters showcased our ingenuity and affluence. They were a symbol of our *strength, security, and status*. That's why they were targeted by the Al Queda fighters on September 11<sup>th</sup>. The terrorists wanted to shame us - topple our strength - shatter our security - shrink our status in the eyes of the world.

Today, the vacant hole at Ground Zero remains a scar on our nation's psyche - and it's my opinion the scar will remain until some structure is built in its place.

This is how God - and the Jews who cared about the things of God - felt about the walls of Jerusalem. The crumbled walls were a symbol of Judah's humiliation.

The toppled stones and charred timbers were *a Hebrew Ground Zero*. They were a scar on the nation's psyche - a symbol of defeat. *And God knew His people would never fully recover until the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.*

This is why God called a man named Nehemiah to return from Persia and reconstruct the walls. When Nehemiah arrives he takes a nighttime stroll around the city to assess the damage. The next day he rallies the people, and gains their cooperation. He then divides the wall into small sections for each family to rebuild.

And this rebuilding would've been a monumental task in and of itself - but what made it more difficult was that it was achieved in the face of intense opposition.

Two jealous and threatened Samaritans, Sanballat and Tobiah, work as hard at thwarting Nehemiah's efforts as Nehemiah and the Jews did at building the walls.

The opposition begins in chapter 4, **"It so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews."** In one of his commentaries, Warren Wiersbe writes, **"As soon as God starts to bless, the enemy starts to battle!"** Here they laugh,

mock, and ridicule.

And we too have an enemy. In this world, Satan is the bully on the block – and he doesn't like it when Jesus moves in and takes over. He sure didn't like it when Jesus purchased the lot called your life, and started clearing it for construction.

Nehemiah's enemies employ a 3-fold approach to derail his work on the wall - **intimidation**, **infiltration**, and **isolation**. And Satan will use the same on us...

In tonight's chapters we get to see Nehemiah's reaction to all three strategies.

And (Sanballat) spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish - stones that are burned?" He ridicules Nehemiah's efforts.

If a referee had been on hand he would've given a "*taunting penalty*."

British author, Thomas Carlyle called "*ridicule*", "**the language of the devil**".

And it's true - Satan is a real trash-talker. He tries to discourage us with put-downs and insults. Nobody likes to be laughed at. Words can wound us deeply.

And Sanballat's example was contagious. "**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."** The wall they build will be flimsy and fragile.

Kathleen Kenyon is an archaeologist who excavated Nehemiah's wall, and she discovered that in most places the wall was nine feet thick. It would've required quite a few foxes – *and some fat foxes at that* – to cause this wall to collapse.

As usual, the enemy's taunts were not true. They were lies. It's been said, "[Life is full of obstacle illusions.](#)" Most of our fears are illusions. They never materialize. The workers built despite what the enemy blabbered.

Notice Nehemiah's reaction when he's attacked. It's simple, but profound!

Verse 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! Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.](#)" He counterpunches with prayer.

Nehemiah prays a fiery prayer. He turns his enemies over to a just God.

Notice as soon as the taunts start, Nehemiah drops to his knees and prays.

The Christian army is the only army that marches on its knees. Hey, we win more battles - and get more done - through prayer than through other means.

Evidently, in response to his prayer, God shut-up the enemy and strengthened the builders - for Nehemiah tells us in verse 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.”

Hey, the people had a worker’s mentality. They rolled up their shirtsleeves and stayed at it. Nehemiah played a pivotal role... he came from the king with *letters, and lumber, and leadership* - but the people still needed a mind to work...

And this is true with building of spiritual walls.

The Holy Spirit will help you rebuild walls of morality, character, security, and dignity - but you need “a mind to work.” If you don’t do your part, the walls will remain in ruins. You’ve got to apply God’s Word, pray, fellowship, worship.

You’ve got to get with the program!

The star at the Atlanta Olympics was Michael Johnson - he won the gold in both the 200 and 400 meter races. At first I thought it strange that Johnson's double victory was considered such a unique achievement. If a guy is that fast why can't he win the 200, 400, and 100 - for that matter...

But evidently, the nuances of each event are so specialized it’s hard to compete on a world-class level in more than one distance at a time.

*And that's not only true in track-and-field - it's true in all of life.*

It’s difficult to be world-class in more than one or two areas of life at the same time. That’s why we have to choose where we want to concentrate our energies and time and focus? *In what do you want to be world class?*

You've got to decide what it is you really want to be good at - *making money?... having a nice lawn?... coaching Little*

*League?... winning at fantasy football?... keeping a clean house?... collecting antiques?... playing video games?... or growing in your relationship with Jesus, and building the Kingdom of God?*

But you can't be world-class at everything - you have to choose!

In verse 7 the enemy realizes he can't intimidate, so he tries to **infiltrate**.

“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, and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion.”

Notice, just because Nehemiah responded correctly after the first attack, it doesn't mean his enemies went away. In fact, his problem gets worse.

“**Sanballat**” was a leader among the Samaritans – north of Jerusalem.

His buddy, “**Tobiah**”, and the “**Ammonites**” were east of Jerusalem.

“**Geshem**” and the “**Arabs**” – led hostile forces who lived south of Jerusalem.

And the “**Ashdodites**” were Philistines – a people who lived west of Jerusalem.

Hey, Nehemiah's opposition grows. He's now surrounded by hostile forces. And they've become “**very angry.**” They ratchet up and intensify their attacks.

But notice what he does again – *it's obviously a habit in Nehemiah's life* – verse 9 tells us, “**Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God...**”

Nehemiah kept praying. *Don't ignore what Nehemiah will do... He'll set a watch, and position guards, and arm his workers, and establish lines of communication in the event of an attack...* but his first line of defense was prayer!

William Cowper once wrote, “**Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.**” Luther said, “**My prayer is more than the devil himself.**”

Nehemiah prayed, and he says in verse 9, “**and because of (the enemy) we set a watch against them day and night.**” Nehemiah *watched and prayed.*

Jesus told His disciples, “**Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.**”

When I coach baseball I teach my kids to maintain an infield position. They keep their head up and fanny down. A lot of kids will bend over at the waste, rather than squat with the knees – and the ball will roll through their legs.

But this is also good spiritual position – *keep your head up and watch – keep your fanny down and pray.* Stay alert. Be smart. And stay open to God.

In verse 10 Judah explains what made the enemy's threat so dangerous...

He said, “**The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.**” 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. 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."

They worked around so much rubbish there was the danger of an ambush. The enemy could infiltrate the city, and hide amidst the debris. *Rumble from the rubble.*

And this is the problem in the reconstruction of our lives – so much debris and rubbish remain from the past. The Bible calls it the “*flesh*” - evil thoughts, wrong attitudes, bad habits, embarrassing memories, twisted perspectives

The Holy Spirit works in our lives to establish new thoughts, healthy attitudes, good habits, biblical perspectives – but the flesh is always there. Like Nehemiah, we’re also rebuilding in the midst of the rubbish – and it’s the flesh that makes it easy for the enemy to infiltrate, and sabotage, and try to destroy the work.

This is another reason *to watch and pray!*

Nehemiah takes more precautions in verse 13, “**Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.**” Notice, where Nehemiah sets his guards - “**behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings**”

Here are Satan’s favorite targets – the foundation and the openings. In other words, *what we believe* and *what we receive* - our beliefs and our influences.



Guard the openings into your life - your eyes and ears. Don't invite evil into your mind through the music you listen to, or the shows that you watch.

And don't buy into this world's value system – it's headed to hell.

Nehemiah tells the Jews, “And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “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.”

Let me say to the fathers and husbands in the room tonight. *The stakes are high.* Guys, you set the pace for your family. If you set high standards for yourself and build walls of character and strength it will provide protection for your family.

But if you chose to live without walls the devil will pillage the people you love.

If you love your family you'll “fight for your sons, your daughters, your wives...”

Verse 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.” The current plot was thwarted, but the enemy still existed.

They'd not so much retreated - as regrouped. The Jews had to remain vigilant.

“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. 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.” Here’s a helpful analogy...

What does it takes to rebuild the walls of my life? A sword in one hand, and a shovel in the other... *building and battling – war and work – fighting and fixing.*

We need to *build* and *battle*! So what if you build walls, but aren’t ready when the enemy attacks. On the other hand, I know believers with a combat mentality - they love to fight - they’re always anti-something, but they never cultivate personal peace, joy, holiness. Verse 17 strikes the balance, “with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.” It takes a sword and a shovel.

Nehemiah **built**, he **battled**, and he took one more precaution - he **bugled**.

Read verse 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.

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. Our God will fight for us." Nehemiah responds to **intimidation**, **infiltration**, and now **isolation**.

His workers are so spread out on the wall that if one section gets attacked no one will know it, until it's too late. There needs to be lines of communication.

*This is why Nehemiah buys I-phones for all the workers...* No, he does solve the problem with lesser technology. A bugle serves as his early warning system. The workers can rally to the sound of the trumpet, and fight for one another.

And this is why fellowship is vital for each other. We too need lines of communication. If Satan can isolate us, he can pick us off one at a time.

If Satan can cut you off from God's family he's got you in his pocket.

He can discourage you. Cause doubt. Confusion and bitterness sets in. The world, faith, temptation, even God looks different when you're all alone...

The saddest news is to hear - *after the fact* - that a believer was ambushed. If we had only heard in time we could've offered our encouragement, and our help.

This is why our discipleships groups and home fellowships are absolutely vital.

Verse 21 **"So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. 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."** Nehemiah's workers were so dedicated to rebuild the walls that no one went home. They were on duty around the clock.

“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.”

With this kind of dedication we'd assume the completion of the walls was a foregone conclusion, but a problem arises that causes *a work stoppage*.

Chapter 5, 'And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live."

There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine."

There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards."

What the enemy outside the camp had been unable to do – the Jews inside of the camp had accomplished – they stopped the work. Greed was the culprit.

The rich were oppressing the poor. They were making loans, and charging exorbitant interest. When their fellow Jews couldn't pay, the creditors started confiscating their property, and selling their kids into slavery. It was awful.

Remember, Exodus 22:35 forbid a Jew from charging his brother interest.

The work on the wall had created financial hardships for many Jews. They had taken off work to help Nehemiah. The influx of Jews into the city of Jerusalem had made resources scarce and driven up prices. Times were tough, but rather than showing leniency the landlords and creditors were squeezing the people.

And notice Nehemiah's response, verse 6, **"And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words."** He wasn't just *angry*, but **"very angry."**

Recall there were several occasions when Jesus got angry. Moses got angry. Paul got angry. In fact, Paul told the Ephesians, in 4:26, **"Be angry, and do not sin..."** Be angry - but channel that anger in godly and constructive directions.

There are some issues that should fill us with a godly, righteous anger.

It reminds me of the little girl - showing her friend the bathroom. She pointed to the scales, and commented, **"I don't know what this is, but my mom and dad use it every day. All I know is when you stand on it, it makes you really mad!"**

The other night at the High School soccer game one of the parents made the comment, **"It seems our coach only plays the hotheads, and the rowdy kids."**

And that was probably accurate... Anger is a two-edged sword... A kid who gets angry over being beat, or playing

poorly, will at times act out inappropriately – but the player who never gets angry, or upset, lacks a necessary motivation.

Nehemiah got angry for the right reasons. He was a good leader.

Verse 7 “**After serious thought...**” Nehemiah was a great leader, and here’s another example – *he used his brain before he opened his mouth*. As the Italian philosopher once said, “**Always use your noodle before you order the pasta!**”

“**After serious thought I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them.**” Nehemiah calls the people together for a town hall meeting.

And I said to them, “**According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?"** Then they were silenced and found nothing to say.” Had they come out of exile to be exploited by each other?

“**Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?"**”

“**I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain.**” Nehemiah had been aiding the Jews, while other has been exploiting them.

“**Please, let us stop this usury! (No more interest) Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money**”

and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." Give back what you've confiscated, *plus some benevolence...*

"So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Nehemiah makes them take an oath and illustrates a warning...

"Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied."

And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

Verse 14 "Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the 20<sup>th</sup> year until the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of King Artaxerxes, 12 years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions." In other words, for the 12 years he held the title as "governor" he never drew a full salary.

Nehemiah was there to serve the people – not for the people to serve him.

He and his servants lived modestly, and took only what they needed.

"But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people (heavy taxes), and took from them bread and wine, besides 40 shekels of silver.



Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God.” What a tremendous example of a servant leader.

“Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we did not buy any land.”

Nehemiah didn’t use his time in office to build up a cushy retirement. He spent all his energy and effort on the job at hand – rebuilding the walls.

“All my servants were gathered there for the work. And at my table were 150 Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us.”

Nehemiah fed 150 workers at his own table – out of his own pocket.

Now that which was prepared daily was one ox and 6 choice sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every 10 days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand the governor's provisions, because the bondage was heavy on this people.” A good leader shows compassion.

Once, Colonel Sanders, of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, was on an airplane with a crying infant. Hey, flying on an airplane with a crying baby is worse than Chinese water torture. Everybody in the cabin was on their emotional edge.

The desperate mother tried to her best to get the baby to stop crying, but nothing worked - that’s when the Colonel asked if he could hold the baby. Within seconds he rocked the baby girl to sleep. After giving the child back to her mom, a

fellow passenger thanked him. “We all appreciate what you just did for us...”

The Colonel’s reply is the mark of a good leader. He said, “I didn’t do it for us. I did it for the baby.” Compassion was the real secret recipe that made his great.

A good leader – in the church, or community, or home – isn’t out for number one - to make his own life better. He’s cares about the welfare of other people.

In verse 19 Nehemiah looks to God - and not man - for His reward, “Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”

In chapter 6 the attacks against Nehemiah grow personal.

“Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono.” This location was 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem – equidistant from the Jewish capitol and the Samaritan capitol - a day’s journey for Nehemiah.

The way the invitation comes across it sounds friendly. “There’s been some tension between us. Let’s meet half way, and work out our differences...”

But Nehemiah smelled a rat. When he heard the word, “Ono”, I’m sure he thought “Oh No!” there’s danger ahead. Nehemiah had good discernment.

This was a set-up - an ambush. Only a *Yoko* would go to *Ono*.

Nehemiah concludes in verse 2, “But they thought to do me harm.”

He replies to their invitation in verse 3, “So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” What a great response! Nehemiah has been commissioned by God to build a wall – not to attend meetings and get involved in irrelevant discussions. He knows His God-given calling and remains focused.

Duffy Daugherty, former football coach for the Michigan State Spartans, said, “When you play for the national championship, it’s not a matter of life or death. It’s more important than that.” This is how Nehemiah felt about his work on the wall.

What God calls me to do is more important than life or death... *the glory of God is at stake*. My life will mean more if I die tomorrow doing God’s will, than if I live to be 100 years old having never attempted what God intended for me to do. A work for God is always a “great work”, and deserves our single-minded devotion.

Here’s the point, the right priorities protected Nehemiah from danger.

Hey, we make ourselves vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks when we forget what we’ve been called to do... when we come down from the wall.

Leave your **post** and you'll be **toast**. But godly priorities keep you safe.

In verse 4, Nehemiah continues, “**But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.**” You’ve got to admire Nehemiah’s doggedness. Four times he gets an invitation, and four times he refuses.

Hey, if something is wrong the first time – then it’ll also be wrong the second time, and the third time, and the fourth time... and the 400<sup>th</sup> time.

“**Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. In it was written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.**” These were blatant lies.

Nehemiah had no desire to rebel against the Persians - and no ambition to become a king. He had carefully sought the emperor’s permission before ever undertaking the mission. Geshem is trying to coax a defense from Nehemiah.

Verse 7 “**And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, 'There is a king in Judah!' Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together.**” Lies and more lies.

Geshem falsely accuses Nehemiah thinking... if he won’t come to the plain of Ono to *talk to us*, maybe he’ll come to *defend himself*... It’s the same trap.

Here's what Geshem doesn't realize. It's not about Nehemiah – or his reputation. It's about God's glory. He will not let anything distract him.

During the early days of the Salvation Army, William Booth was bitterly attacked in the press by religious leaders and government leaders alike.

Whenever Booth was shown a blistering newspaper article, the General would reply, "Fifty years from now it will matter very little how these people treated us; but it will matter a great deal how we dealt with the work of God."

This is the perspective we need. Don't worry about what people say or think about you... be concerned about what God says or thinks about you.

"Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart." For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done."

Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." Once again, Nehemiah sees through the enemy's scheme, and asks for God's strength to finish his task.

Nehemiah reminds me of the skunk family. They were attacked from all sides.

They huddled together in a circle; held hands with one another; bowed their heads and closed their eyes... then the father skunk said, "Let us spray."

That's what Nehemiah does – he denies the charges, prays a prayer, and stays focused on the work God called him to do!

Hey, **spray, pray, and stay!**

In verse 10, obedience to Scripture protects Nehemiah.

The enemy hatches another plot. "Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you." He wants Nehemiah to flee to the Temple to protect himself.

But here's what he leaves out – it was a sin for anyone not a priest or Levite to enter the Temple. Shemaiah is trying to scare Nehemiah into disobeying God.

Nehemiah responds in verse 11, "And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" Nehemiah knew his Bible. He knew God's Law. He knew the Temple was off-limits to him... Hey, before he ever discovered that Shemaiah was an enemy operative - and this was just a ploy - he knew he didn't want to disobey God.

He would rather obey God and face the assassins than disobey and face God.

Nehemiah refuses to fall for this trap for two reasons.

First, it's not his nature to run - and second, he knows it's not his place to enter the Temple. *This time it's principle that becomes Nehemiah's protection.*

When you do the right thing, and make good choices, God can protect you. It's when you step outside of God's will that

you're on your own, and prone to danger.

Notice, it's only after Nehemiah makes the right choice that he discerns the real intentions of Shemaiah. Verse 12 tells us, "Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me." But he didn't discern until he'd made the right choice.

If we always saw beforehand how saying "no" to sin, and "yes" to God would benefit us it would be easier to make decisions. *But that wouldn't take faith.*

At the time, fleeing to the Temple seemed easier and safer for Nehemiah – but he chose to obey God. This time biblical principles protected him from danger.

In verse 14, Nehemiah prays, "My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid." This is the first mention of the role these false prophets had played. Particularly, a woman named *Noadiah*.

She'd been hired by Sanballat to create problems for Nehemiah.

Verse 15, "So the wall was finished on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Elul (August-September), in 52 days..." It was an amazing accomplishment for such a short period of time.

Verse 15 reminds me of 1 Thessalonians 5:24, "He who



calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” In other words, what God starts He always finishes!

And notice how Nehemiah’s neighbors react, “**And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.**” They didn’t credit Nehemiah. They knew this had to be a work of God.

This is the ultimate goal in any work for God – that in the end the feat is seen not just as a *work for God*, but as the *work of God*. That God receives the credit!

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a revival swept across the island of Wales.

People repented of their sin. Entire communities were impacted. A spirit of love and holiness permeated society. Bars and brothels closed down for lack of business. The whole country was impacted by the influence of Christianity.

Once, a preacher named, David Morgan, was traveling home from church on Sunday with a friend. As they walked, the friend stated, “*Didn’t we have blessed meetings Mr. Morgan?*” Morgan answered, “Yes”, then after a long pause, added, “*The Lord would give us great things if only He could trust us.*” His friend replied, “*What do you mean?*” “*If only He could trust us not to steal the glory for ourselves.*”

Then Morgan cried at the top of his lungs Psalm 115... a song we sing at Calvary... “*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.*”

God will use this church to spread the love and truth of Jesus – and build strong walls in our community – if we keep our hands off the glory.

It's my desire that when people look at Calvary Chapel they look past my efforts, and your efforts, and **“perceive that this work was done by our God.”**

Well, the wall is up. It's been built. It's done. It's finished. You'd think the enemies of Nehemiah would admit defeat, and give up – *but not so...*

Verse 17 **“Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.”**

Tobiah was the enemy - Sanballat's sidekick. He'd married into an aristocratic Jewish family, and kept close relations with the nobles of Jerusalem.

Verse 19 **“Also they reported his good deeds before me and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.”** Even after the walls were completed Tobiah was still creating mischief. He'll turn up again years later in chapter 13.