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The Opposition

We are studying Nehemiah, a man who displayed leadership qualities that correspond to the “Be,” “Know,” “Do” categories of the Army Leadership Manual FM 22-100. First, “Be” means “be somebody, have character.” If someone in leadership doesn’t have character then there is going to be corruption because they don’t have standards to live by, they don’t have honor, they don’t have loyalty, they don’t have integrity, they don’t have selflessness and they don’t have courage. To be a great leader you must be these things and the firm bedrock of these is the absolute standards of Scripture. Second, “know” means you must know your abilities and how to accomplish objectives. If someone doesn’t know their abilities then they can set objectives that are beyond their ability to reach. If someone doesn’t have the technical abilities then it may be a great idea but it’s not going to work. If someone can’t work with other people it’s going to be a mess and nothing will get accomplished. To be a great leader you have to set reasonable goals within your abilities. Third, “Do” means “do it, take action.” If someone doesn’t assess the situation well they’re not going to be a good leader. If someone doesn’t plan well by organizing the materials, the people, etc...then they’re just going to frustrate people and create antagonism. If someone doesn’t plan for obstacles and know how to surmount those obstacles he’s not going to be much of a leader. If someone doesn’t know how to motivate people they’re not going to take them very far. Leadership requires character and competence to achieve excellence and that means being a “Be,” “Know,” “Do” kind of individual.

We’ve already seen that Nehemiah is a “Be” kind of individual. He has tremendous character. He had to have character in order to serve as cupbearer to the great King Artaxerxes of the Persian Empire. He displayed loyalty to the king, duty in his service, integrity in maintaining quiet

concerning kingdom affairs and personal courage in going in before the king with his concern over Jerusalem, a hot issue in the king's policy manual. He was also a "Know" kind of individual. He knew his abilities and what he could accomplish in Jerusalem. He had interpersonal skills in dealing with a vast array of personalities like the king and the leaders in Jerusalem. He had technical know-how in carrying out construction projects, the kind of permits he would need to get a project underway. He had tactically thought through who to use to accomplish such a grand project, the people who lived or worked near the walls. He was also a "Do" kind of individual in that he took action to analyze the situation carefully by inspecting the damage to the city walls. He communicated his concerns well to the leaders and people of Jerusalem. He was a decision maker and knew how to execute a decision with clarity and precision. And if we're to build new leaders for the next generation we have to encourage them to have character and competence in order to achieve excellence.

Tonight we see more of the "Do" aspect of Nehemiah's leadership. With initial success underway it wasn't long before opposition arose. "The real test of a leader is how he or she faces crises and reacts to opposition."¹

The opposition in chapter 4 is the same opposition we met on two occasions in chapter 2; Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite. Nehemiah had first met them at one of the checkpoints on his journey to Jerusalem. They were evidently men in governmental positions of some authority and they investigated Nehemiah's travel plans and when they realized that he had come to seek the welfare of the Jews they became very displeased (2:10). However, Nehemiah had letters in hand from the king as well as a military escort and so they couldn't stop him from making his way to Jerusalem. A second run in occurred when these two men as well as "Geshem the Arab" caught wind of Nehemiah's plan to build the wall of Jerusalem. This time they attempted to intimidate him by mocking and despising him, even questioning if the building was rebellion against the king. In this case Nehemiah stood courageously against their intimidation tactics proclaiming that God was able to give them success and they had no rights in Jerusalem.

Tonight we meet Sanballat and Tobiah for a third opposition in 4:1. **Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews.** This

Sanballat, we said in earlier classes, is evidenced in the Elephantine papyri. These papyri are Jewish manuscripts dating from the 5th century BC, the very century these events took place. Elephantine was an island city in the middle of the Nile River of Upper Egypt near Nubia. It was a Persian military installation that housed a substantial Jewish community. This community produced a number of legal documents and personal letters that were well-preserved in the hot, dry climate of Egypt. They were discovered in 1843 but did not come into knowledgeable hands until 50 years later in 1893. These documents mention a **Sanballat** who governed Samaria around 407BC and show that he had authority N of Jerusalem. This **Sanballat** is said in 2:10 to be a “Horonite.” This probably connects him to two cities of Horon, Upper and Lower Beth-horon. These two cities controlled a major highway that led from the Mediterranean Sea to Jerusalem. Since **Sanballat** governed Samaria he would control this trade route that led to Jerusalem. The fortification of Jerusalem would lead to greater independence of Jerusalem and consequently it would dramatically lessen his control and economic interests in the region. For these personal reasons he vehemently opposed Nehemiah’s rebuilding project and took several steps to stop it.

Sanballat’s first tactic of opposition is found in 4:1-6. Here he implements the tactics of intimidation. Intimidation can be a very effective weapon at deterring an interest or project. In 4:1 **it came about that when Sanballat heard that they were rebuilding the wall. They were rebuilding the wall** of Jerusalem. This, as we mentioned, threatened Sanballat’s economic and political interests in the region. Thus **he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews.** We was evidently overwhelmed by his anger, it was an unnatural kind of anger and therefore demonically inspired.

In verse 2 **he publicly spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria.** Two groups, the first group is clear, **his brothers**, the second group is not so clear because the Hebrew word for **wealthy** basically means “might.” It can refer to economic might or physical might, the context determines. If it’s economic might then it might be translated **wealthy** but if it’s physical might then it should be translated “army.” Considering that verse 8, the later strategy involves fighting against Jerusalem we would conclude that it should be translated “army” in verse 2 and not **wealthy**. Since he was governor over Samaria he was speaking to the army **of Samaria.**

And out of his anger he opened his big mouth to mock the Jews. First, **What are these feeble Jews doing?** In other words, they're so weak, what are these weak Jews trying to do? They are few in number. They can't do anything. God always likes these odds by the way, He chose Israel and they were the least of all the nations. Second, **Are they going to restore it for themselves?** In other words, because they are so few in number it will be quickly overrun and enjoyed by others, not themselves. Third, **Can they offer sacrifices?** In other words, can they ever finish so as to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving to their God for success? Fourth, **Can they finish in a day?** In other words, this question implies that they have no idea the immensity of their undertaking. In other words, they are incompetent. Well, we'll see about that. Fifth, **Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?** In other words, how can they build any kind of defensible fortress with burned, weakened debris stones? From the human standpoint it was an impossible feat.

And verse 3 this taunt excited Tobiah to offer his own, **now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!** In other words, the quality of craftsmanship was so inept that if a little bitty fox leaped on it the whole thing would collapse.

And apparently this taunting was widespread because word of it got around to Nehemiah and so in verse 4 we come to Nehemiah's first response. It's interesting to watch how people first respond in a situation. They have a team in medical circles called first responders and it's their job to be on the scene first and undergo certain procedures in order to save time and lives. So what was Nehemiah's first response? Prayer. What's your first response when someone mocks you? It's usually to mock back. But Nehemiah went straight to the Lord in prayer. We said this man teaches you that prayer is a vital part of leadership. So he's going to turn to God in prayer and this prayer is one of the most controversial in the entire Bible. **Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.** That prayer, many Christians have said is not worthy of the Bible and it ought to be taken out of the Bible. One writer said,

“We shudder as we read his terrible words...” Do not forgive their iniquity. C. S. Lewis was so embarrassed by these kinds of passages that he argued they were not inspired by the Holy Spirit and should be removed from the Bible. Now I warn you that these parts of the Bible are known by well-informed atheists even though most Christians never read them. So we should know about them because one day someone’s going to take you to task for them and so you better have some kind of a response prepared or you’re going to get aced.

Now these kinds of Scriptures are classified as imprecatory because they are God’s people calling down curses on the enemy. They’re common in the Psalms but we find this prayer in Nehemiah’s prayer and a prayer in Jeremiah as well. And they’re very explicit, they just sound merciless and people say, I thought Jesus said, love your enemies so how can we call down judgment on our enemies? How do we give an account for these parts of the Bible? What are they doing in here? There are at least six principles we need to understand to give an account. First, the Fall, man is fallen, man is not innocent so there is evil in the world, there is antagonism toward God. And evil has to be dealt with in some manner or it will overrun the good. Second, the solution to the problem of evil is judgment. People talk about negotiation, let’s negotiate and that’s fine as a starting point and hopefully that will work out for you. But there comes a time when negotiation turns into endless negotiation. An example would be the negotiations between Israel and the so-called Palestinian for a two-state solution. They already had a two-state solution in 1921, it was already in place, agreed upon and it didn’t work then so why is it going to work now? It’s just endless negotiation. The evil there must be destroyed. Final judgment is what separates good from evil. Judgment is necessary if you ever want to get peace. So peace is on the other side of judgment. People don’t like war and judgment, I don’t like it, it’s terrible, but it’s necessary to eliminate evil so we can get to peace. So people who want world peace have a good desire, it’s just that by protesting war they’re delaying getting to the peace because peace requires war. Third, God is the one who is going to wage the final war against evil. Ultimately the battle is his. Deut 30:5, “Vengeance is mine, I shall repay.” This is simply what the Bible teaches. God is going to separate out the good from the evil and the way He does that is judgment. So to pray for God to judge evil is not contrary to Scripture. Without it we can never get to peace. Fourth, God is the standard of judgment, He is righteous and therefore He knows who is

good and who is evil so that when the day of judgment comes he judges the evil and not the good. Ps 111:6, "Upon the wicked He will rain snares." Because God is the standard He knows the objects of His judgment and He has stated that he will judge the evil so to pray in that direction cannot be contrary to Scripture. Fifth, God has covenant love for Israel that promised cursing for cursing. Gen 12:3, "I will curse those who curse you..." God had stated under the covenant provisions for Israel that He would bring curses upon those who cursed Israel so it would not be contrary to God's revealed purposes for Israelites to pray for cursing upon those who were cursing them. It would just be claiming the promises of God! Sixth, because God has promised to curse their enemies then ultimately God will curse them. In other words, ultimately God will answer their prayers. He may have answered these prayers in part in past times but God will answer these prayers fully in the future Tribulation. So we call these the ethics of final judgment. Right now we live in the ethics of common grace but in the future Tribulation the ethics of common grace will be temporarily suspended and the ethics of final judgment will come into play. So I take it that Nehemiah is invoking a prayer that looks forward to the ethics of final judgment, it's not out of keeping with Scripture. Nehemiah was simply recognizing that there is evil in the world and that God is the righteous judge and He will exercise judgement against those who curse His people Israel since He promised to do so. So the imprecatory psalms and prayers in the Bible can be understood as expressing the ethics of final judgment. They may bother us at first but when we understand that indeed there is a time coming in history when God is going to get fed up with all this mess and he's going to judge evil decisively, we can be thankful because without it the evil problem will never be solved.

Now can we apply this to the church age? Do we have enemies? Of course we do. Our enemies are not flesh and blood like they were for Israel but are the rulers, the powers and the world forces of this darkness, spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Our conflict is in the heavenly realm and we are to take up the full armor of God to stand against them and resist them. We are plugged into a cosmic conflict and we don't know all that is involved and how it plays out but we are to know that we are in a battle that is raging in the heavenlies and how we respond here and now in the Christian life is directly related to the current conflict in heaven. So can we pray against the rulers, the powers and the world forces of darkness, the evil demonic beings? Is it proper to pray that God would smash their teeth?

Absolutely. It's not a problem. It's a godly prayer. They are our enemies and we are in conflict with them but we can't defeat them without God so we put on the armor by prayer. So there is a parallel for us in the NT Church and these kinds of prayers are completely valid and I hope you appreciate them, don't knock them like C. S. Lewis, don't be embarrassed by them; embrace them because they look forward to the solution to the problem of evil, break Satan's dominion God, crush Him.

Now we said this prayer was Nehemiah's first response. Always the first response is prayer. But prayer isn't the only response. The second response is to keep building. Verse 6, **So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.** The people had a vested interest in constructing the walls around their homes and places of business so they got after it. They persevered. We are informed later that the whole project took 52 days to complete but since the first half was built without opposition while the second half was built with opposition I take it that they finished the first **half** in probably around 20 days. This was a tremendous pace. And we are to recognize that something more than mere human hands were at work. God was at work behind the human hands to make them successful.

So with verse 6 we conclude that the first tactic of opposition, intimidation, was defeated. Not only was intimidation defeated but it actually worked for their benefit and the people completed half the work very quickly. However, far too often intimidation tactics are not defeated but rather successful at depleting us of our energies and rendering us unsuccessful. For example, as Redpath wrote, "When the Christian dares to say that the only hope of the world is in the Gospel of God's redeeming grace, the whole force of modern civilization and education lines up against him and says, "You, with your feeble prayer meetings. You, with your silly little plan of getting people converted one by one. How can that possibly stand alongside our great socializing economic program in which a whole world can be revolutionized in a few years?"ⁱⁱ This force of darkness deadens many Christians to any hope for success. Yet the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and when we preach it with humble boldness it is a light that pierces the darkness of human hearts. So intimidation tactics may sound big but ultimately they're nothing but a lot of hot air and baloney talk. So we need to take note of Nehemiah's first response to handle it. Pray! Go to God in prayer. He knew it

was evil and contrary to the purposes of God and so he prayed an imprecatory prayer against them. His second response. Persevere! Keep on persevering in the work. Through these means they defeated the intimidation.

However, verse 7, the opponents were not ready to give up. We'd say Satan is relentless. **Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry.** What's happened here that's different from vv 1-3? The enemy opposition has grown. We not only have **Sanballat** and **Tobiah** as before, but we also have **the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites**. These people came from the four points of the compass around Jerusalem; N, S, E and W. The **Arabs** you might take note of because today they surround Jerusalem on every side and they embrace the radical ideology of Islam. These people are extreme and want to take over the world and rule by Sharia law. God's going to solve the problem of Islam in the future Tribulation but these people are their ancient descendants. They are related to the Jews through Abraham's concubine Hagar his second wife Keturah. They are known in the Bible as "the children from the east" and so in this passage come from the E. **Sanballat** comes from Samaria in the N, the **Ammonites** are the descendants of Lot through his son Ammon and so come from beyond Jordan to the S and the **Ashdodites** are Philistines, they come from the W along the coast. The point is that the enemy opposition has grown and is now surrounding Jerusalem.

Verse 8 gives us the new tactic, **All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.** At this time the details of the plan were not known, all that was known was a physical assault on the city. This tactic shows an escalation in the tension. The purpose is to cause a disturbance which will impede progress and cause the Jews to wander off course and abandon the project. This, of course, can also be a very effective tactic and requires good leadership to resist. It mentions that this came about by conspiracy. I'm not a conspiracy theorist in the modern sense of the term but these men did **conspire together**. The Hebrew **conspire** means they bound themselves together in a pact. As far as conspiracy goes I hold that there is one great conspirator and that is Satan and he has workers who carry out his will. The whole world is under his influence and I take it that he is the greater mind behind nation's leaders

influencing them to turn against the Jews and Jerusalem. So the second tactic implemented is a physical assault on the city with the goal of causing a disturbance which causes them to wander off course and abandon the project.

In verse 9 the Jews respond and the implication is that they had caught wind of the coming assault. They must have had agents who lived among them and discovered the new tactic. And notice in verse 9 the first response. **But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.** Once again what's the first action when we meet opposition? Prayer. If you get nothing else out of this book learn that the first thing you do, always, is you go to God in prayer. A good leader, when he is met by opposition, goes immediately to prayer. But notice this isn't just Nehemiah going to prayer. He doesn't say I prayed to our God; he says **we prayed to our God.** So Nehemiah's first response of prayer is rubbing off on others. Sometimes it just takes one praying man to encourage others to engage in this mighty ministry. In 1857 Jeremiah Lanphier wanted to make a difference and so announced a prayer meeting. He went there alone and knelt to pray, after ten minutes nobody was there, after twenty minutes no one came, finally after 12:30 a man came in and knelt to pray, after an hour six men had gathered to pray. The next week there were twenty, the third week there was forty and the fourth week there was over a hundred and many were asking how to be saved. When a financial crisis hit the fifth week the prayer meeting grew. By six months ten thousand businessmen were gathering weekly to pray in police stations, fire stations and all around New York City. After that God left New York City. Just kidding. In any case I think you see that sometimes it just takes one man praying and others begin to pray. In any case the first response was prayer.

Then the second response, verse 9, **and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night,** meaning they stationed watchmen along the wall. We traced the walls last week in a counterclockwise rotation in order to identify the location of the work so you have a good idea where these men were stationed. A tidbit of theology you might pick up here is that prayer is not opposed to taking action. You'll see this over and over in Nehemiah; prayer is followed by action related to the prayer. They prayed for God's protection and they set up a guard for protection. Now this is not failing to trust that God will answer the prayer. Sometimes a hyper spiritual type of person will say, "Well, I don't take any action after prayer, I just trust

God.” And everybody else is supposed to feel a sense of shame for not trusting God. I imagine these people get some kind of spiritual high out of it. But they fail to take into account that God often answers prayer through human action. D. L. Moody one time was on a ship that caught on fire. He and another man got in line passing buckets with the crew to put out the fire. The man said, “Mr. Moody, let us go to the other end of the ship and pray.” Mr Moody replied, “No sir; we stand right here and pass buckets and pray hard all the time!”ⁱⁱⁱ So taking action is not contrary to prayer nor is it the opposite of trusting God. It’s recognizing that there are things we can do and there are things that we cannot do. And if there are things we can do we should do them, but there are always things that are beyond our ability to do and that’s why we pray to God. So they prayed to God *and* they stationed men along the wall to keep watch.

Verse 10, more problems cropped up. **Thus in Judah it was said**, in other words this was a saying that came about in Judah because of these events, **“The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall.”** In other words, we are progressively being weakened, we’re getting fatigued and yet there is a long way to go on the project and so left to ourselves we’re unable to finish the wall. They’re admitting human weakness, incapacity. And obviously by doing so they’re calling on what attribute of God to compensate for their weakness? His power, what we call omnipotence; His vast reserves of energy that never run dry. God can enable us to rebuild.

Verse 11, **Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.”** Now this shows you the attack they planned was covert, in some way they were going to sneak into the city. Perhaps they knew how David and his mighty men had snuck into the city centuries before through the Gihon Spring. In any case they designed the same kind of covert attack. But notice verse 12, who did God have providentially placed among these enemies? Covert Mossad agents once more. **When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, “They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,”** in other words, they’re going to get inside the city so you can’t turn anywhere for safety. And notice they waited till they got the report **ten times**. Why did they wait till they heard the same story **ten times**? To confirm the information. You don’t just rush off into some action without

confirming that indeed there is action to take. To take some course of action which would divert attention away from the goal objectives is unnecessary unless there is a genuine need to take the action. Nehemiah was exercising excellent leadership by analyzing the incoming reports but waiting to take action until sufficient evidence of these reports surfaced.

Then, verse 13 he takes action, **I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows.** He devised a strategy of putting whole **families** in the lowest portions behind the walls. This, of course, was a high alert situation but Nehemiah had no choice if work was to continue on the walls. It would also put the men of the families under extreme pressure since they would be in a situation that required them to protect their wife and children, a very frightening situation indeed.

And in verse 14 you see there was fear. It's a crisis situation and the ultimate test of a leader is how he handles a crisis. Had Nehemiah thought far enough ahead to deal with the crisis? Did he meet the criteria of a "Do" kind of leader? Was he able to act quickly and decisively to turn fear into courage? Fear was starting to infect the people and without quick and decisive action it would spread to the whole group and destroy morale to fight and finish the walls. As General George C. Marshall said, "It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that decides the issue. It is morale that wins the victory." The people were at a low point. It was time for Nehemiah to face the supreme test of leadership.

Now in verse 14 the first step in meeting the demands of a crisis is to recognize there is a crisis. This means you have to stay in touch with the people and remain observant and alert to the atmosphere. Did Nehemiah recognize a crisis? **When I saw their fear.** So yes, he recognized it; he could see it on their faces. The second step in meeting the demands of a crisis is to take quick and decisive action. Did he? **I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people:** yes he did. He decided to give a speech that would remove the fear and encourage them, give them strength. Now the speech is interesting because it's short and to the point. People in fear don't have time for a long drawn out sermon. Just give them something they can hang on to. So he says, **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 houses.” There are two commands here. First, **do not be afraid.** This is possible as they **remember the Lord who is great and awesome.** This terminology would immediately conjure up images in their mind from the days of Joshua and the Conquest. That generation had faced terrible foes much larger in number, size and arms and yet God had given them mighty victories shocking the opposition. There was no need or time for Nehemiah to give them details of these victories; it was enough to simply remind them generally about these things and allow their own minds to reflect upon the detailed imagery of past victories that demonstrated the Lord was on their side. Second command, **fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.** He reminds them who they are fighting for. These who belong to them, their kith and kin. These close associations would motivate them to fight with vigor. So you see it's not a big long speech, it's short and to the point. The reason is because the people are in a state of fear and to communicate to people in a state of fear you need to be clear, crisp and concise; that way you don't confuse everybody. When people are in fear they tend to hear some of what you say and miss other parts. So avoid the communication problem altogether and deliver a short, clear, concise speech. Good leadership.

Now as we come to verse 15 we understand that the speech was heard and understood and that people came out of their fear and the Lord began to work on their behalf. **When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.** That was all it took. The very fact that the enemies discovered that the Jews knew about the surprise attack was sufficient to spoil their plan and lead them to call off the attack. Ironically, whereas the enemies wanted to stop the Jews from rebuilding, it was the God of the Jews who stopped the enemies from advancing. **God had frustrated their plan** by making it known to the enemies that the Jews had made provisions for a surprise attack. Therefore Nehemiah passed a crucial test of leadership. He had led the people from a state of fear into a state of confidence; confidence not in themselves but in God who frustrates the plans of the wicked. The result, **then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.** It was a short but necessary delay. But now they could get back to work,

Verse 16, **From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.** The work force was divided in order to present a prepared military posture toward the enemies. And the **captains** were behind them armed as well, that is, they were in full support and acting to carry out Nehemiah's plan. There were not some who were in opposition. This is also crucial to successful leadership. If you don't have everyone on board then you're not going to have the kind of support you need to effectively pursue a goal or objective. Everyone here was on board and therefore we have a model of successful leadership in the time of Nehemiah.

Verse 17-23 describes more details of the plan. The long of the short of it is that they were working handicapped but they were well armed and prepared for an enemy assault and this was part of the means that gave them success.

I want to summarize and draw some conclusions. In summary, when it was heard that they were rebuilding the wall Sanballat became angry and led a campaign of mockery against the Jews. In response Nehemiah prayed an imprecatory prayer calling down judgment on their enemies. He then persevered in building the wall accomplishing much. When the enemies heard of the progress they joined hands in a pact to physically assault the Jews and cause the project to be abandoned. In response Nehemiah joined in prayed with others admitting their weakness and inability apart from God's strength. When sufficient reports came that the assault would be a covert operation Nehemiah responded by stationing families behind the wall. This caused great fear but Nehemiah rose to the occasion and encouraged them by reciting the Lord's greatness in past battles and encouraging them to fight with vigor for their families. When the enemies heard that their covert operation was known by the Jews they backed down and the Jews continued to work on ready alert.

In conclusion what lessons can we learn? First, don't be intimidated by those who would mock the Christian faith. If intimidation comes your way immediately go to the Lord in prayer and continue to persevere. Second, don't be afraid to utter imprecatory prayers against Satan and the demons. We are in a cosmic conflict and our enemies are trying to dismantle our faith. We can put on our armor by prayer each day and have victory like Nehemiah. Third,

know the enemy is relentless. The enemy may up the resistance when we are victorious over him. We should not be dismayed. Again we should immediately turn to prayer and continue to persevere. Finally, lead by detecting problems and acting decisively to solve the problem so that it does not get out of control. Fear could have spread throughout the entirety of Jerusalem leaving them frozen before their enemies. Nehemiah gave them a short, concise speech that reminded them of God's past work on their behalf and encouraged them to fight with courage.

Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. These in verse 17 were those who were carrying stones or mortar to the wall for the builders to assemble them. Since they could carry the materials with one hand they carried a **weapon** in the other. It's not as efficient but it was necessary to remain prepared for an enemy attack.

Verse 18 refers to the builders or rock masons themselves, **As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me.** The builders in order to build needed both hands so they had to carry a weapon at their side. Though again this slowed down the work it was necessary to remain in a fortified position. The trumpeter stood near Nehemiah so that if an enemy attack was detected then the alert could be sounded.

Verse 19 explains, **I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another** the very goal of the enemies to stop the Jews rebuilding they needed to be encouraged at this point Nehemiah has to show leadership. He has to get out in front and encourage, motivate and move the people out of fear and into confidence.

ⁱ Breneman, p 193.

ⁱⁱ Campbell, p 37.

ⁱⁱⁱ Campbell, p 39.